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WHEN PAINTING WAS IN GLORY

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THE ALBA MADONNA

Raphael

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

THOUGH not a work of original research, this book is, nevertheless, the direct result of numerous visits, spread over a quarter of a century, to many of the great and small European galleries and churches. There I examined and studied the works of the artists about whom I have written. This book is constructed from materials which are now accessible to almost everyone, and it deals only in broad outline with the general characteristics of some of the Italian masters or with their individual works, if these are to be seen in galleries and churches easily accessible to the public.

Because the main historical facts of Italian art are well known to-day, and because the main principles are now seldom the subject of heated controversy, the author of a new work can but seize salient points, and, while emphasizing his own points of view, set them forth in the form which the student can most readily grasp and understand. My basic points of view in this book are that Italy was not sunk in the troughs of barbarism before the coming of Giotto and Duccio, and that the Church from the earliest time helped rather than hindered the development of painting.

I have attempted to avoid side issues. The so-called Schools of Rome and Milan I have ignored, because they were not native schools but the marvellous florescence, in the city of the popes and in the capital of Lombardy, of the art of the three major Schools of Florence, Umbria, and Venice. These schools produced hundreds of painters, but as I had no desire to compose an encyclopaedia of Italian masters, I have mentioned in a period covering three hundred years the names of only eighty-odd artists. I have briefly commented on the works of about half that number, and have written at length on scarcely a dozen of the great outstanding personages of Renaissance art. The distinction I have drawn between major and minor figures, the artists I have included, the artists I have omitted, and the opinions I have expressed will not, I know, satisfy everyone. We all have our favourites.

It may be well, therefore, to anticipate the criticism of those who will search in vain for even a passing reference to some favourite painter, by pleading that in a small book, written in very simple language and primarily for students and the general public, prominent personages and main outlines

may be a paramount claim. For a discussion of minor figures or of involved and complicated gradations I had no space.

Again, it may be well to anticipate the criticism of those who think that, as there are now available so many excellent monographs on individual artists, I should have omitted all biographical details. To this I reply that the personality and the circumstances of an artist, his family, his environment, teachers, friendships, tastes, and character, are often of great interest to the reader, and help him to understand and to appreciate the achievements of the artist. The words Addison wrote over two centuries ago about authors can to-day be as aptly applied to painters. In the first volume of the *Spectator* he remarks: "I have observed that a Reader seldom peruses a Book with Pleasure, till he knows whether the Writer of it be a black or a fair Man, of a mild or cholerick Disposition, Married or a Batchelar, with other Particulars of the like nature, that conduce very much to the right Understanding of an Author."

I am under a debt of gratitude to many members of the Dominican Order for their interest in the writing of this book, especially to my friends Rev. M. H. Gaffney, O.P., the Dominican playwright, of Black Abbey, Kilkenny; to Very Rev. Louis Nolan, O.P., of Santa Sabina, Rome; to the Prior of St. Mark's, Florence; and to the Dominicans of Siena, Venice, and other Italian cities for their hospitality, guidance, and advice. My thanks are also due to Very Rev. A. H. Ryan, D.D., Ph.D., of Queen's University, Belfast, for useful criticism; to Very Rev. Patrick Rogers, M.A., D.Litt., M.R.I.A., of St. Malachy's Diocesan College, Belfast, for preparing the index; to Mr. James J. Campbell, M.A., of the same college, for proofreading; to Miss Anne Hackett, of the Central Reference Library, Belfast; and to my daughter, Madeleine, for research, revision, and secretarial work.

PADRAIC GREGORY

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RELATION OF RELIGION AND NATIONALITY TO ART

To Literature, Music, Architecture, and Sculpture

RELIGION is the main, primal, generative power in all great art, whether the artist strives to express himself in literature, music, architecture, sculpture, or painting. Nationality, if rightly influenced and guided by religion, moulds and fashions, nourishes and enriches art. "All religions cherish art," said Napoleon to Canova, "but none so much as our own." By religion we mean two things: first, the exercise of the mind in recognising the existence of a Supreme Being, almighty God, as the object of worship and the Supreme Lawgiver; and second, the exercise of the will in adhering to the goodness of that truth by conduct in obedience to the moral law.

For all truly great artists, dogmas of religion have been the main and the true inspiration of art. "Religion is the foundation of art," said Rodin in our own day, and the very essence of religion is dogma. The paintings and the sculptures of the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Etruscans were prompted and preserved by veneration of the mystic gods of the dead. Religion and nationality were the twin sources from which sprang the greatest works of Homer and Phidias, of S. Ambrose and S. Gregory, and of Cimabue and Giotto. The twin sources from which, in after ages, sprang the towering abbeys of the Frank and of the Norman Benedictines, the fine Gothic of the Cistercians, the great cathedrals of Christendom, the stained glass of Chartres, the sculptures of Pisa and Amiens, the tapestries of Flanders, the metal-work of Spain, and, in our own age, the *Nine Symphonies* of Beethoven, the *Parsifal* of Wagner, the *Apologia* of Newman, and the poetry of Francis Thompson.

The masterpieces of the three great Attic tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were born from love of religion and love of country, as were

two of the greatest poems of antiquity, *The Book of the Dead* in Egypt and the *Iliad* in Greece. Aeschylus, who has been styled "the Phidias of tragic art," but whose modesty prompted him to characterise his own dramas as mere fragments of the great Homeric banquet, was the son of a priest of Eleusis. He was early initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, whose spiritual value, as bringing home to the minds of their votaries the fundamental truths of religion, such as the existence of one eternal God and the immortality of the soul, is attested not only by such writers of antiquity as Cicero and Plutarch but also by the Fathers of the Church. Sophocles enforces the pagan conception of retribution, which displays itself as a heritage of crime, descending from generation to generation, till at length, by submission of one of the descendants to the heavenly mandates, the divine justice of the gods is satisfied and the working of the curse is stayed. Euripides, the friend and disciple of Anaxagoras, though to a certain extent in sympathy with the sceptical tendencies of the Periclean epoch, gives abundant proof in his dramas that he was at heart a devout man and desirous of raising his audience to a higher level of religious thought. Indeed, it would be well nigh impossible to reconstruct these plays without their gods, their fates, their furies, their overruling power of Zeus, and their worship of Dionysus, the god of inspiration. In other pagan poets, Hesiod and Pindar, we see at a glance how religious beliefs influenced their works. The *Theogony* of Hesiod has for its subject the gods themselves.

The Book of Job, a Hebrew artistic master-work, which tells of the reconciliation of the sufferings of the righteous with the justice of an omnipotent and omniscient God, and the *Psalms* of David, with their laudations of Yaweh, God without beginning and without end, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, yet, the shepherd of His people, their guide, and their sympathising friend, are both the works of artists ever conscious of and profoundly impressed by the mystery which shrouds the working of the divine will. These great poems for originality and for depth and fervour of emotion remain unsurpassed in the literature of the world. Likewise, the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare, the *Magico Prodigioso* of Calderon, and the *Faust* of Goethe are masterpieces, whose creators were ever aware of the abiding presence of a Supreme Being.

Religion and nationality begot the Latin hymnody of the West, the tales of Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers, of King Arthur and his Round Table, the *Cid*, *Roland*, the *Gesta Romanorum*, and the palmer tales of the crusades. Likewise they begot the works of Dante and other European poets, the *Fioretti* of the Franciscans, the *Chronicles* of Froissart, the miracle plays

and mysteries of the Middle Ages, the *Canterbury Tales*, and the noblest product of the Elizabethan era—an era attributable to the Catholicism of the Middle Ages—Shakespeare.

Without Christianity mankind would never have possessed the writings of the Evangelists, the Apostles, the early Fathers, and learned Doctors of the Church, or, to speed down the centuries in seconds and to mention but one department of literature, the inspired mystical treatises of Ruysbroeck, William and Hugo of S. Victor, and Thomas à Kempis. Without religion there would be no meditations from those remarkable and world-influencing women: Brigit, the queen of Sweden; Juliana, the estated gentlewoman of Norwich; and Catherine, the quasi-illiterate daughter of a humble wool-dyer of Siena. Without the generative power of religion, we should, in a word, be without all that is noblest in ancient, mediæval, and post-mediæval literature. Without it we should, in this our own day, have no works of Newman, Francis Thompson, and Chesterton in England; Bourget, Claudel, and Ghéon in France; Jorgensen in Denmark; Papini in Italy; to mention but a few Catholic writers. Indeed, without the generative power of religion, the world would not possess the literatures of Christian Scientism, of agnosticism, rationalism, spiritism, and one hundred and other "isms." Even in the writings of men opposed to the Church of Christ, religion is the efficient and formal cause.

When men first aspired to praise the deities they served, or when they first strove to extol the beauties of their native land, music, like poetry, was born. Religious instinct urged man to honour his creator and, by means of music, to heighten his religious exaltation. Under the Old Law, music was given an important place in the divine services of the Temple. Throughout the Old Testament frequent mention is made of songs of praise and victory of a religious nature. David himself beautified religious ceremonies by psalms and the use of musical instruments.

Tertullian, Pliny, Eusebius, and Philo mention the early Christian practice of praising God with music. The first Christian melodies were, perhaps, remnants of ancient Hebrew chants preserved through the ages. S. Athanasius encouraged the art of music, although he restricted the singing of psalms to a kind of recitative. S. Jerome exhorted those who would praise God with song to sing with humility. "Let the servant of God," he wrote, "sing in such a manner that the words of the text rather than the voice of the singer cause delight." Two illustrious Doctors of the Church, S. Hilary, the vigilant bishop of Poitiers, who had become familiar with Greek metrical hymns during his exile in Phrygia, and S. Ambrose, the great bishop of

Milan, who began writing hymns as a means of combating Arianism, introduced, with lasting success, the antiphonal singing of psalms. The first school of song mentioned is that founded in Rome by Pope Sylvester between A.D. 314 and 355, while later schools are ascribed to Pope Hilarus, A.D. 461-468, and to other popes. The story of the work done for music by S. Ambrose and his successors, of the development of original musical modes, of the establishment of antiphonal psalmody, and of the organisation of a system that made plain chant possible, is a romance infused through and through with a profound respect for art, a devotion to fatherland, a reverence for holy Church, and a sincere love of God and creation.

Even those who can recognise nationality in music and melody scarcely realize how very deeply its roots are embedded in this great art. To cite but one example, the great S. Gregory, who exercised a momentous influence on the doctrine, the organisation, and the discipline of the entire Church, and to whom a fairly constant tradition ascribes a certain final arrangement of the Roman chant, had to defend himself against the charge of attempting to bring the music of Byzantium to Rome, and to explain that his aim was not to introduce the music of the Greeks but to develop that of the Romans. Indeed, several centuries after his time, the differences of those who wished to have Gregorian music and those who preferred to keep Spanish chant occasioned fierce arguments and even fighting and bloodshed in the city of Toledo.

During the four centuries that elapsed between the death of S. Ambrose and that of Charlemagne, many Christian composers imitated the Ambrosian hymns with conspicuous success. Among these are S. Paulinus, S. Nicetas, Prudentius, Sedulius, the composer of the beautiful Christmas hymn, *A Solis Ortus Cardine*; Fortunatus, "the last of the Latin poets of Gaul," the author of the *Vexilla Regis* and the sublime *Pange Lingua*; Paul the Deacon, a Benedictine of Monte Cassino; and Rabanus Maurus, archbishop of Mainz and probable author of the famous *Veni Creator Spiritus*. In the period covering the ninth to the sixteenth centuries, hymns became more subjective than the austere compositions of S. Ambrose and his imitators. During these centuries appear the great names of S. Thomas Aquinas, the poet of the Blessed Sacrament; Bernard of Cluny; Adam of S. Victor, the most prolific hymn writer of the Middle Ages; Jacopone da Todi, author of one of the most poignant poems ever written, the *Stabat Mater*; and the immortal Thomas of Celano, author of the incomparable *Dies Irae*.

With the close of the Middle Ages, the great period of Latin hymnody came to an end. One cause of its decay was the Renaissance, for to the

humanist the Latin poem that did not reach the standard of the Augustan age was a barbarism. But religion remained the great generative power in music, and the most renowned musicians still continued to derive their inspiration from the teaching of the Church and to place their talents at her service. In the first decade of the tenth century, one of the most important developments in the history of music, namely, the combining or multiplying of vocal parts took place. With this new movement the names of Huebald (or Ubaldus), a Benedictine monk of S. Amand, in the French Netherlands, who lived from A.D. 840 to 930, and Guido of Arezzo, a Benedictine of Pamposa, who lived from A.D. 993 to 1050, will forever be associated. And so on down the centuries, history bears the most convincing testimony as to the great debt music owes religion. In the official melodies of the Church, which run the whole gamut of human emotion, from the poignant grief in the *Tenebrae* to the exuberant joyousness in the *Exultet* of Holy Saturday, there is an immense quantity of music. Those who read the history of the founders of the Old French School, of the Gallo-Belgian School, of the Dutch School, and of the Italian School, especially the lives of Johannes Okeghem, Josquin des Pres, Adrian Willaert, Orlando di Lasso, and Giovanni Pierluigi, known to fame as Palestrina, will readily admit that many of the major developments in music have resulted from the efforts of churchmen to enlarge musical modes for the ceremonial uses of the Church.

That religion and nationality have been the chief forces in influencing man in his most sublime architectural conceptions will be readily admitted, if we pause for a moment to remember that the temples of the Greeks, while being coldly and rationalistically beautiful, were small because they were built merely as shrines for their gods and goddesses, and not to house great congregations as were the Gothic cathedrals of the ages of faith. A poem or a melody may be heard, or a painting may be seen thousands of miles from the place in which it was conceived, but a great building must be erected where it is meant to remain, and so, generally speaking, the architect is restricted to the building materials of the locality. This explains why the Egyptians and the Byzantines used brick, the Greeks marble, the Romans cement, and the French limestone.

Taine, in his *Lectures on Art*, writes: "Just as there is a physical temperature (zone), which by its variations determines the appearance of this or that species of plant, so there is a moral temperature, which by its variations determines the appearance of this or that species of art."

Therefore, leaving the buildings of antiquity and coming to Christian architecture, it can easily be shown that the latter expresses Christian thoughts

and ideals, and that the whole vicissitudes of the Church's history are faithfully recorded in her buildings of the Graeco-Roman, the Byzantine, the Romanesque, the Gothic, the Renaissance, and (what has now come to be called) the Modern styles of architecture. Each style was the outcome of particular religious, political, and social conditions. The chapels of the catacombs relate the story of the first three centuries; the basilicas and Santa Sophia mark the triumph of the Church and her association with the Byzantine Empire. Similarly, Romanesque architecture, which gave us Aix, Spires, and Mainz, is a reminder of the protection afforded to the weak by the Church and of her valiant efforts to reorganise Europe after the destruction of the Empire by the Goths and the Vandals. The Gothic style, a glory of the Christian commonwealth in action, was the product of the age which gave the world the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas, the *Speculum Majus* of Vincent of Beauvais, the *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* of Durandus, and the *Golden Legend* of James of Voragine. It was, in a word, the product of the age that gave us sanctity and song — Dominic and Dante, sanctity in action and action in sanctity — Louis of France and Francis of Assisi. And then, Christian Renaissance architecture was born of the Church's heroic struggle against paganism and heresy; and, lastly, the Modern style is the product of an age of speed, chaos, upheaval, and confusion, of an age of religious, philosophic, social, and economic revolt.

If, properly to appreciate Gothic architecture, one should possess at least some knowledge of the history of monasticism, of the crusades, of feudalism, of the founding of the mendicant orders, of the rise of the guilds, and of Thomistic philosophy, what should one know in order to appreciate properly Modern architecture? Must one be able to appreciate futuristic music, cubist paintings, free verse, the glorification of the straight line in building, and pornographic novels? Must one believe in trial marriages, in contraception, in state control of the religious education of youth, in the use of poison gas in warfare, and in all the other ultra-modern, but equally efficacious, methods of human destruction? These debased art forms and practices are some of the logical (or illogical) products of the debauch of the Renaissance, the anarchy of the Reformation, and the poison of the Revolution. Modern architecture is but the natural development or "evolution" of Renaissance architecture at its worst.

The philosophical inspiration of futurism with its wild love of novelty, its "absolute commencements," its motion for motion's sake, is but the thought of Bergson. The philosophical inspiration of cubism with its unrelated blocks, is but the philosophy of pluralism. Indeed, the whole inspiration of

Modern art is but Kantian subjectivism, the heritage of which is, in a sentence, that no work of art itself is beautiful, but that it is our psychic or mental states that are beautiful, either because we project these states to the object, or because they harmonise with the tastes and commandments of society, or because they produce interesting reactions.

The exponents of Modern art are, verily, the lineal descendants of sires who sat at the feet of Rousseau, and they have inherited his venomous hatred for tradition. Even as the individual cannot act correctly to-day without thinking back, without remembering what he did yesterday, so society cannot think without its memory, tradition. "It is owing to tradition," says Pascal, "that the whole procession of men in the course of so many centuries may be considered as a single mind which always subsists and which learns continually." The exponents of Modern art decry constituted authority, and attempt, not unsuccessfully, to establish new first principles. They shriek stridently for originality at any cost in all art forms, conveniently forgetting the truth of Coventry Patmore's teaching: "Unless originality works in harmony with and in submission to the general law, it loses its nature; in morals it becomes sin or insanity; in manners and in art, oddity and eccentricity, which are in reality the extreme opposites of originality."

In sculpture, as in other arts, the influences of religion and nationality are marked. Pre-Christian sculpture attained its zenith in Greece, whose artists, embodying in human personalities the fundamental ideas underlying the Hellenic divinities, and appealing to the soul and the eye through the medium of external form, gave birth to models of ideal beauty which have never been surpassed. Greek art began with Greek religion and the first objects to be carved were gods. Greece, it should be remembered, consisted of a multitude of little states and cities, each with local tutelary deities, and, consequently, hundreds of temples, adorned with their statues, rose up all over the land. Local pride and ambition prompted each state to seek from its artists a perfect realisation of their conception of the local deity or deities and to urge them to surpass their neighbours in the excellence of the result. Therefore, partly a genuine devotion to the deity and partly national or provincial pride were, in the end, responsible for the masterpieces of Greek sculpture, even as, at a later time, love of God and love of the territory they occupied prompted Italian painters to give the world the masterpieces of the Schools of Florence, Umbria, and Venice.

Even in the decline, when belief in the gods was rapidly disappearing, the Greeks took their subjects from the domain of religion. Their votive statues for victory in battle, for supremacy in athletic games, and for deliverance

from evils of every description, belong to what, in a wide sense, may be called religious sculpture. And it should always be borne in mind, to the credit of the Greeks, that although, in their passionate admiration for beauty, they regarded the human form in its supreme type as the fittest vehicle for the manifestation of their divinities, it was only in the age of their decline that representation of the nude began to prevail. The most perfect specimens of Grecian plastic art, the "Zeus" and the "Athena" of Phidias, were draped figures, to which pilgrimages were organised, not in order to enjoy the sensuous beauty of body but to forget sorrow and suffering and to be fortified by religion.

As religion and nationality were the great generative powers in Greek sculpture, so were they the main springs of Byzantine and Gothic sculpture. During the Constantinian era the dovetailing of the old Graeco-Roman with the new Christian sculpture in the Hellenistic tradition took place. While there flourished in Constantinople, along with the art of decorative sculpture, the arts of stone-carving and of working in metal, ivory, and ornamented bronze, it was through its architects and mosaic craftsmen that Byzantium made its greatest contribution to world art. Santa Sophia, one of the finest buildings in the world, and mosaic work, the art of painting with cubes of coloured glass upon large surfaces, are undisputed glories of Byzantine genius. Moreover, Italian architecture had been Byzantinised between the sixth and the eleventh centuries, before it was Romanesque; and Byzantine art made possible the work of Cimabue, and, therefore, lay behind all the discoveries and inventions of Giotto.

Gothic art was the aesthetic expression of that epoch which witnessed the extinction of paganism, the destruction of the traditions of classical civilisation, the defeat and ultimate conversion of barbarian invaders, and the rise of the Church to spiritual power which was supreme and unchallenged in authority, and to temporal sovereignty which placed in her hands the destinies of nascent nations. During the early centuries of the Christian era, the Church had given the world the art of the catacombs, while fighting ceaselessly against a dying imperialism and, later, against barbaric invasions. From A.D. 313 to the end of the fifth century was a period of artistic creation and transformation, but the transference of the seat of government by Pope Honorius in A.D. 404 from Rome to Ravenna and the confusion that arose in the Western Roman Empire had far-reaching consequences on the development of Christian art. For many generations the ablest scholars held that the rediscovery and restoration of sculpture as a fine art was due to Niccola Pisano and other Italian masters. But we now know that the revival began,

more than a century before Pisano's time, in the south of France, where Byzantine remains were numerous and where Byzantine tradition still lingered. Central France saw a development of the revival and produced works which adorn the portals and façades of the cathedrals of Amiens, Chartres, Paris, and Rheims. The subjects of these representations are our Blessed Lord, both as the Saviour of the world and as its Supreme Judge, the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, the prophets, the saints, and the kings of the realm.

It has been stated frequently that perhaps the most perfect presentation of the human form divine is the statue of Christ over the main doors of Amiens. A modern critic has written: "Now that we are getting over our obsessions about classical perfection and the Renaissance, and are beginning to use our eyes, it is being increasingly recognised that only the finest Greek sculpture can be put in the same rank as that of Chartres or Rheims." Indeed, the religion of the Middle Ages inspired that much-maligned epoch's sculptors to perfect their technique to such an extent that Gothic sculpture flourished and came to occupy a place in the history of art to which it had never before attained.

Likewise the subjects of all the early Italian sculptors were inspired by religion. Witness the works of the early Lombards, the Pisans and the Florentines, of Niccolò and Giovanni Pisano, Balduccio di Pisa, the Cosmati, and Lorenzo Ghiberti. In the early, full, and late periods of the Renaissance, the greatest masters of the plastic art still continued to derive their inspiration from the teachings of the Church. Donatello, Verrocchio, da Vinci, della Robbia, "the Raphael of sculpture," and Michelangelo, to name but a few, one and all owe their fame not so much to the genius or the talent they exhibited in creating their masterpieces, but to the depth of feeling which love of God inspired them to put into their works. Pisano's pulpit of the Baptistery of Pisa; Ghiberti's doors to the Baptistery of Florence, which the great Michelangelo said were worthy to be the gates of Paradise; Donatello's bas-relief of S. Cecilia and his statue of S. George; and Michelangelo's *Pieta*, which has come to be looked upon as one of the most perfect pieces of sculpture ever carved by the hands of man, could only have been conceived and executed by men who really believed that a sense of what is noble, beautiful, and sublime is not less important than a sense for the practical realities of life. One, they well knew, needs cultivating quite as much as the other, and fully they realised that man's needs go infinitely beyond what is simply useful, and that it was their duty to endeavour, by their art, to give body to the very limited vision of perfection and beauty enjoyed by their more mortal brethren.

Thus the literateurs, the musicians, the architects, and the sculptors, whom the human race has most loved in life and honoured by lasting remembrance in death, and by whom it has been influenced for good, have been men of religion and men of art, but it is, perhaps, on the art of painting — as the succeeding chapters of this book will endeavour to show — that religion and nationality have left their deepest and most ineradicable imprint.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RISE AND FALL OF CHRISTIAN ART

Art in the Service of the Church

THE art of Egypt and Assyria, buried in the tombs of the prehistoric Pharaohs and the Ninevite kings, was a mythic art: its exponents striving, childishly, to express in myths the truths they could not comprehend. Pre-Christian art, which shed its rays over Etruria and Rome, was a pagan art: its exponents setting up temples and palaces flooded with beauty, and satisfying themselves with giving of their best to the gods they worshipped, and, as it were, bringing them down to dwell with men. Early Christian art was a symbolic art, an art that can never again become as important as it was of old. It was an art whose exponents, of necessity, expressed everything in symbols that, though full of significance to themselves, conveyed no meaning to the heathens around them. Symbols are merely suggestive, allowing the imagination full play around and beyond them and serving as stepping-stones to the Ideal which always eludes their grasp and remains inexpressible. But fully developed Christian art, Christian art in its golden age, was a perfect art. It was an art whose rays have lighted and beautified the universal world because they caught and reflected some of the divine effulgence which emanates from the body of beauty's Author.

As soon as the Church began to take definite form as a visible society, painting received a place of honour. Indeed, from the time of the catacombs and for many centuries after Constantine, religious painting was the only form of painting in the Christian world. Moreover, until the end of the full or beginning of the late Renaissance periods, the Church was almost the sole patron and inspirer of this sphere of art.

The Church has never been opposed to art, and the prevalent confusion on the subject of the Church's attitude toward art is due to a number of long-established historical errors. One of the errors, into which some art historians have fallen, is that Christianity was founded in an environment

hostile to art because it was a Jewish environment. Such was not the case. That the Jewish religion frowned upon the making and setting up of images should not have been taken to mean that the Jewish religion opposed art. Another error is that early Christian writers condemned art. Such was not the case. Not one of them, not even Tertullian, condemned art; they did condemn the misuse of it. A third error into which the art historians fell — when Christian archaeology was in its youth — was to suppose that the catacombs of Rome were exceptional in their art. Again, such was not the case. We now know that similar art with the same iconography existed all over Mediterranean Christendom. Another cause for the still prevalent belief that the Church was opposed to art, at least down to that period which is vaguely known as the close of the Middle Ages, was the ignorance of the art historians concerning both early Christian and Byzantine art and also concerning the development of art from the founding of Christianity to the dawn of the Renaissance.

But when, true to her divine mission, the Church, even in the catacombs, began to teach and guide mankind, her first duty was to fight the corrupted morality of the age. To aid her in this gigantic task, she enlisted art in her service, but she avoided, as far as possible, such art forms as might remind her converts of their former idolatrous beliefs and superstitions. By allegory and metaphor, symbols and types — the vine, the fish, the lamb, or the good shepherd, she had her early artists remind the faithful of the life and death of the God-man. To the Church, art was not an end in itself; she sought to make it a means of instruction and edification. She never misinterpreted the function of language, nor miscalculated its limitations so far as to believe that it could convey to her children the exact meaning of the Gospels any more infallibly than painting. "The picture conceals the strength of the Gospel under a coarser but more expressive form," says the Patriarch Nicephorus. "The picture is to the illiterate what the written word is to the educated," says S. Gregory. "What speech presents to the ear, painting portrays by a mute imitation," says S. Basil. And it was laid down at the Second Nicene Council, in A.D. 787, that "a picture is not to be fashioned after the fancy of the painter, but according to the inviolable traditions of the holy Catholic Church."

As late as 1355, in the preamble to the statutes of their guild, the painters of Siena stated: "Since by the grace of God we are teachers to unlearned men who know not how to read of the marvels done by the power and in the strength of holy religion; and since the foundations of our faith are principally laid in the adoration and belief of one God in Trinity and in

God's infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite love and mercy; and since no undertaking, however small, can have a beginning or an end without these three things, that is, without the power to do, without knowledge, and without true love of the work; and since in God every perfection is eminently united; now to the end that in this our calling, however unworthy it may be, we may have a good beginning and a good ending in all our works and deeds, we will earnestly ask the aid of divine grace and commence by a dedication to the honour of the name, and in the name of the Most Holy Trinity." At the height of the Renaissance, in 1513, Albrecht Dürer wrote: "The art of painting is used in the service of the Church to depict the sufferings of Christ and of many other models; it also preserves the countenances of men after their death." Thus while admitting art to a place of honour, the Church encouraged art to be didactic, conservative, and hieratic, but of this aspect of religious painting we shall speak elsewhere in the present volume.

Art as understood by the Greeks and the Romans, and as still understood by those races which have inherited their incomparable culture, meant the quest for beauty and the creation of beautiful things. The teaching of Plato was known to the early Christians, and it was Plato who said: "The artist who fixes his eyes upon the unchanging beauty and uses it as a model in reproducing the idea of virtue can never fail to produce a work of finished beauty, while he who has his eyes fixed on the changing things of time and their perishable models can make nothing beautiful." They knew, too, from Cicero that Phidias "in making a Jupiter or Minerva, did not have his eyes upon a particular model but upon a certain finished type of beauty which inspired his art and guided his hand." This is not to say that beauty, as understood by the Greeks, must be accepted as an essential quality of every artistic masterpiece. Shakespeare's dramatic gems, *Othello* and *Hamlet*, have unbeautiful themes, jealousy and vindictiveness. Again, a painting of a blood-drenched, almost fleshless Christ, with staring lifeless eyes, matted beard, and gaping mouth, will not be regarded as a thing of physical beauty, although, in thus depicting our Saviour on the cross, the artist has attempted, in his own peculiar way, to express eternal beauty. A physically perfect and nobly countenanced man, a veritable Adonis, may be loathsome in the sight of God, and a deformed leprous carcass may enshrine the soul of a saint.

Again, the moral value of works of art is independent of the morality of the subjects treated. Works which do not spring from a profound love of good—their edifying pretensions or religious charms notwithstanding—are not moral. For example, an artist could scarcely attempt to depict any-

thing more spiritually beautiful than a saint in ecstasy, and yet Bernini's "S. Teresa Struck by Divine Love" is, to speak charitably about it, very theatrical. On the other hand, there are authentic masterpieces which actually represent extreme ugliness, yet which are undoubtedly moral both in conception and execution. Thus, Ghirlandaio's "Portrait of An Old Man and His Grandchild," one of his masterpieces, teaches us that beauty lies not in regularity and delicacy of features. The spectator does not see the deformed and repellent nose of the old grandfather, so touched is he with the benevolent and affectionate expression of the aged man as he gazes lovingly on his grandchild. Other examples are Ribera's "Clubfooted Boy" in the Louvre, and Ligier Richier's "Statue of Death." The latter, in the majesty and dignity of its poise, may be said to have a certain ghastly beauty. This is not a painting of the Grim Reaper to whom Francis Thompson refers as

". . . Death that doth flush
The cumbered gutters of humanity,"

rather it is a painting of the death of whom he speaks in his

"The fairest things in life are death and birth
And of these two the fairer thing is death."*

For the Greeks, to find beauty was the ultimate goal of art — the ultimate goal of life itself. The early Christian Church did not subscribe to any such fallacious doctrine, any more than she did to the "Art for art's sake" catchcry, which when examined merely means "Art for craftsmanship sake." The Church teaches that all the qualities of God are infinite, that in Him there is fulness of truth and beauty; that as infinite truth He should be the ideal of the scientist, and as infinite beauty He should be the ideal of the artist. It teaches that the more we learn and the more we come to know, the more we fit ourselves to appreciate what is beautiful in all the works of His hands, the more we *may* become like God who is the source of all knowledge and who is that eternal beauty of which all man-created beauty is but a blurred and darkened reflection.

Belief in the existence of God implies belief in an absolute standard of beauty. But the search for beauty can never end, because beauty is the garment of God and is as mysterious as the Godhead. From this three things follow: first, that beauty is merely a means to an end, and so the ultimate goal of life is not to find beauty, but, in the quest for earthly beauty, to find eternal beauty — God Himself; second, that art is, and must ever be, progres-

* *Ode to the Setting Sun.*

sive; and third, that the creations of Christian art are an index of the Church's spirituality.

There always have been and, perhaps, always will be many diverse and conflicting theories as to the various influences, which were predominant in the development of Christian art. Wickoff contends, for example, that, in the first century after Christ, a distinctively Roman style was evolved both in painting and sculpture. On the other hand, Strzygowski attributes the predominant influence in its development to the recrudescence of purely Oriental feeling, which, he maintains, had always survived at Byzantium, Antioch, and Alexandria. The writer leans to the opinion that the Church in the Mediterranean area accepted the Graeco-Roman art of the age, accompanied that art through its decline to the time of Constantine, and then helped it to a remarkable recovery. Basis for this belief lies in the fact that since the Roman catacombs were rediscovered in 1578, several interesting examples of Christian painting have been found, which are regarded as belonging to the period when the Gospels were being written. The first attempts on the walls of the catacombs resemble the frescoes which adorned the walls of some dwellings in Pompeii. They are largely ornamental and childishly pagan in content, conception, and expression, and Christian only in intention and symbolic value. Unmistakably Christian subjects first appear at the beginning of the second century. But the good shepherd of the early Christians—all that has been written by eminent critics to the contrary notwithstanding—might easily be the Graeco-Roman Hermes, and is symbolic rather than personal, while the "Orante," the praying woman, is strongly Hellenistic. Old Testament scenes and figures are frequently met with, but always such as would illustrate the New: Noe in the ark, to signify the Church of Christ; Jonas and the whale, foreshadowing the Resurrection; the three children in the furnace, Elias and his fiery horses, showing forth the ascension of Christ into heaven; and Moses striking the rock symbolising man's rebirth in Christ. Representations of the Passion of our Lord are altogether unknown in the earlier ages; even the cross was used by the early Christians only as a sign of the sufferings of Christ. New Testament subjects are almost entirely restricted to such miracles as have symbolic reference to the sacraments. Symbolic conceptions become ever more common, and the representation of the feeding of the multitude with the miraculously multiplied loaves and fishes takes a conspicuous place among them. The characteristic signs of these pictures are the baskets, whose number varies in different cases, and the seven men partaking of a meal. With the third century came different frescoes, wherein, in representing the consecration, our Blessed

Lord is usually shown standing and touching baskets of bread; the bread is round and flat in shape, and contains crosses nicked to facilitate breaking; the number of the baskets is commonly seven.

The conditions of self-effacement and the frequently recurring persecutions, under which the early Christians existed, tended towards the development of symbolistic treatment of religious truths. Furthermore, the abhorrence of carved representations of the objects of worship, inherited by the Christian from the Jewish Church, was so strong as almost to forbid the application of sculpture to the service of religion. Religious teaching pointed in the same direction. S. John Damascene declared that the essence of the divine nature ought not to be represented, since it had never been revealed to the human eye. This teaching, coupled with the difficulty felt by artists in attempting to create a visible form out of an invisible substance, helps to account for the fact that it is not till the third century that we discover the first personal representation of our Blessed Saviour, and, indeed, not till near the close of the thirteenth century do we find many portraits of God the Father. It may well have been that the Divine Master was still too near in memory, His life and sufferings as yet too sacred to permit of any attempts at portraiture.*

The first reference to any picture of our Lord is made by Tertullian, who was born about A.D. 160. Towards the year A.D. 340 Eusebius, the first ecclesiastical historian, speaks about certain likenesses then extant, and, in the following century, S. Augustine writes in his *Confessions*: "The image of Christ according to the flesh has been created and modified by countless conceptions, all varying. His true likeness is unknown to us." From the third to the fifth century, the Fathers of the Church differed widely in their ideas concerning the physiognomy of our Lord. Some of the Eastern Fathers, including Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others, based their conceptions of Him on the authority of the fifty-third chapter of Isaias: "There is no beauty in Him nor comeliness; and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him"; while some of the Western Fathers, including Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, formed their conceptions of Him on the authority of the words of the forty-fourth Psalm: "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men; grace is poured abroad in Thy lips." These vastly different conceptions of our Blessed Saviour, no doubt, helped to influence the origin of two different schools of painting: the not-pleasing, rigid, stiff, and impassive productions of the Byzantine

* Cf. also the *Disciplina Arcani*.

artists; and the attractive and physically perfect productions of the early Italian artists, who had, by the end of the fourth century, left the bearded figure of tradition well defined.

With the triumph of the Church under Constantine, the grave necessity for hiding the mysteries of the faith rapidly disappeared, and, when the early Christians left the shadow of the catacombs, it was not long before the lamb crowned with a nimbus or the good shepherd with long hair, a halo, and a cross, were fearlessly introduced. The Western Empire in its decline had no stable capital. Now it was Ravenna and now it was Rome. Art was deteriorating and the figure and the face of our Blessed Lord grew more and more stereotyped; the drawing became hard, the eyes round and staring with a fixed expression, the hands were badly drawn, and the garments fell in one piece without the softening effect of shadows. From the eighth till the eleventh century art seemed to be dying; the ancient classic beauty had declined and had gradually disappeared. The Greeks, pagans, and sensualists, had aimed at the harmonious development of the human frame, but the early Christians looked upon the body, with its appetites and passions, as the vehicle of temptation and as a foe ever to be combated and held in subjection by the higher nature.

Constantine's Empire of the East had, however, evolved an art which was not a decadent survival of the Classical age but an entirely new creation destined to have a far-reaching influence on the art of succeeding ages. The Church was quick to appreciate the possibilities of the new art. This new art was, in truth, symbolical of the faith itself, for it combined classical form with eastern colour, the one fixed and definite, representing the logical basis of the Christian religion, the other limitless, fluid, mysterious, representing that vast mystical realm which is revealed to the soul illuminated by grace, but which is impenetrable to logic. Henceforth, art in the service of the Church progressed along the roads of form and colour. Greek love of perfect form wedded to wonderful Roman engineering skill produced the stately basilicas which, later, among the men of the other European countries, grew into the awe-inspiring and soul-uplifting Gothic cathedrals, sprung from a unity of impulse, a just understanding of comparative values, from the stimulus of an explicit religious faith, and a firm belief in clearly defined dogmas. Rich in inspiration and creative power but poor in technical skill and with little or no knowledge of perspective, the primitive Italian painters were glad to borrow from their wealthy Byzantine neighbours. They borrowed golden backgrounds and stiff, hieratic figures from the mosaic craftsmen, but their own genius added gestures of dramatic significance and

gleams of spiritual fervour, so that the whole effect of some of even the earliest Italian paintings is reverent poise, dignity, and solemnity, which could not be surpassed even by their most skilled successors. Each nation which, century after century, submitted to the Church brought its own peculiar gifts: the basilicas of Constantine, the shrines of Justinian, the churches of Charlemagne, the Lombardic churches of northern Italy. These, piled on the foundations of Greece and that "half-barbaric grandeur that was Rome," all contributed to the erection of the stupendous edifice of Christian art. The Lombardic architecture of the twelfth century, which is the development in the West of Romanesque architecture, was a source of wonderful artistic influence. This is the Byzantine style without some of its eastern characteristics, but with peculiarities derived from western sources. Ruskin once declared it to be: "the root of all the mediaeval art of Italy—without which no Giotto, no Angelico, and no Raphael would have been possible."

In the thirteenth century, when the Church was the material as well as the spiritual mistress of the world, architecture and sculpture, and the minor but important arts of illumination and fresco, rose to such a lofty point of excellence as to be equal at least to anything that had gone before, and greater than anything that has come after. The famous mosaic of the Coronation of Mary, in the church of S. Mary Major at Rome, dates back to the end of this century. It is the work of Jacopo Torriti, who in the inscription appropriately describes himself as "mosaic painter." In the development of his history of Mary, he drew suggestions and inspiration from the monumental designs of Cavallini. Everything is admirably made to converge on the glorious central figures of Christ and Mary. The golden background bespeaks the survival of Byzantine art, while the large leafy spirals indicate the classic ideal of Rome. Orient and Occident meet in a blaze of colour, light, and beauty. S. Peter's in Rome still remains to this day the mother and the noblest of all the churches in Christendom; while the illuminations of the Book of Kells have never yet been surpassed.

This last-named eighth-century masterpiece of the Irish monks, now in Trinity College, Dublin, is acknowledged by the greatest paleographers to be the most beautiful book ever made. One critic calls it "the Mecca of the illuminative artist," and another "the despair of copyists," while yet a third states: "Into its pages are woven such a wealth of ornament, such an ecstasy of art, and such a miracle of design, that the book is to-day not only one of Ireland's greatest glories but one of the world's wonders!" One smiles indulgently at Vasari's story of the perfect circle Giotto drew, at the request of

Cimabue, for Pope Benedict IX, when one remembers that such perfect circles were accurately drawn by Irish monks, on every page of the Book of Kells, centuries before Giotto was born. Yet to draw a circle unaided by the compass, as Margaret Stokes points out in her *Early Ecclesiastical Art in Ireland*, "is a feat only to be accomplished by an eye and a hand in perfect training in obedience to the artist's will."

But Byzantine art deteriorated. The figures and faces in the paintings became ever more lifeless and fixed. Our Lord was portrayed not as a loving shepherd but as an awe-inspiring judge, and in the countenance of the almond-eyed Virgin Mother there was a grim, set rigidity, with no trace of gentleness or emotion. No great advance was made in painting till the end of the Middle Ages, till the coming of Cimabue and Giotto, who heralded the departure from the rigid Byzantinism of the primitives. It was from the starting point of the latter's discoveries that the art of painting technique progressed by leaps and bounds. The popes, who had returned to Rome in 1378, had resumed their works of embellishment. Martin V, Sixtus IV, Benedict XI, Urban VIII, and especially the learned Nicholas V planned elaborate architectural undertakings and ordered statuary and all kinds of painting in fresco, in mosaic, and, finally, in oil. This period is marked by a rising emulation among the various Italian states, each endeavouring to excel its neighbour in the realms of art. At Milan, the Visconti and the Sforza; at Bologna, the Asinelli; at Venice, the Doges; and lastly at Florence, the Medici, from Giovanni and Cosmo I to Lorenzo the Magnificent, father of Leo X, were but some of the princes who carried on the noble strife of emulation with the Sovereign Pontiffs.

The early Italian painters can be roughly divided into two classes: first, the miniaturists or the illuminators, such as Enrico, Berlinghieri, Oderico, and others; second, the primitive painters such as Margaritone, Spinello, Uccello, Duccio, Memmi, the Lorenzetti, and the various early masters of the Schools of Siena, Padua, and Verona. In the first years of the early Renaissance, Cimabue, Giotto, Orcagna, and other early masters, in their "frescoed theology," in their decorations of the churches of Assisi, Siena, Pisa, and other cities of Italy, are but a few of the long list of painters the Church inspired, nurtured, and enlisted in her service. In the low countries the Van Eycks developed the methods of oil painting, and there arose a school of artists, among whom were Van der Goes, Van der Weyden, Bouts, Christus, Memling, and others who formed the transition from the Gothic School. Towards the close of the early Renaissance, Fra Angelico decorated the cells of San Marco, while Gozzoli, Lippi, Ghirlandaio adorned churches, and

Perugino, Francia, Albertinelli, and Fra Bartolommeo produced altar-pieces which remain to this day among the greatest art treasures of mankind.

The era of Humanism, of return to love of the classics—when it was difficult to mark the boundary line between religion and the beginnings of that strange paganism which was a product of the classical revival—saw the production of the work of the early German painters, of men like Schongauer and the elder Holbein, which undoubtedly prove that there was still a strong religious side to the Humanist movement. Finally, in the period of the full Renaissance, the world was given the works of the great masters of the Venetian School, such as Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, and others. This period also produced the works of Michelangelo and Raphael; of Clouet, Mabuse, and Scorel; of Dürer, Holbein, and Garnach; and of Leonardo da Vinci and Correggio.

The fall of Florence marked: first, the end of the period of great art in that city; second, the enhanced power of the Humanist movement; and third, the destruction of faith which had been so marked a feature of the earlier painters. Luini, Gaudenzio Ferrari, Andrea del Sarto, Bronzino, and other artists still devoted their talents to the service of the Church, but these men were products of the decadence of the Renaissance, which by its erroneous teaching of the sufficiency of the intellect had propounded artificial theories on the nature of beauty and the functions of art. They were the products of an age that had become neo-pagan, luxurious, brilliantly intellectual, outwardly resplendent, but inwardly rotten. A new social order came into being, licentious, unmoral, Christian in name only. New styles in art were deliberately created—just as they are being created to-day. Artists no longer worked for the greater honour and glory of God but for the glorification of man. Swinburne, had he been alive, might have become their poet-laureate, with his

“Glory to man in the highest
For man is the master of all.”

To the detriment of religion and of religious art, princes of the Church were often in the forefront of the movement. In the intervals of their service as the paid hirelings of the powerful rulers, pampered aristocrats, and fabulous wealthy merchants, artists were employed by the Church—the word “employed” is used advisedly, for, with few exceptions, artists were spending themselves in amassing the means of living, not in exalting the ends of life. They were more interested in the new style, in their craftsmanship, and in their lucrative emoluments, than in the religious content of their appointed



BRONZE DOORS

Lorenzo Ghiberti



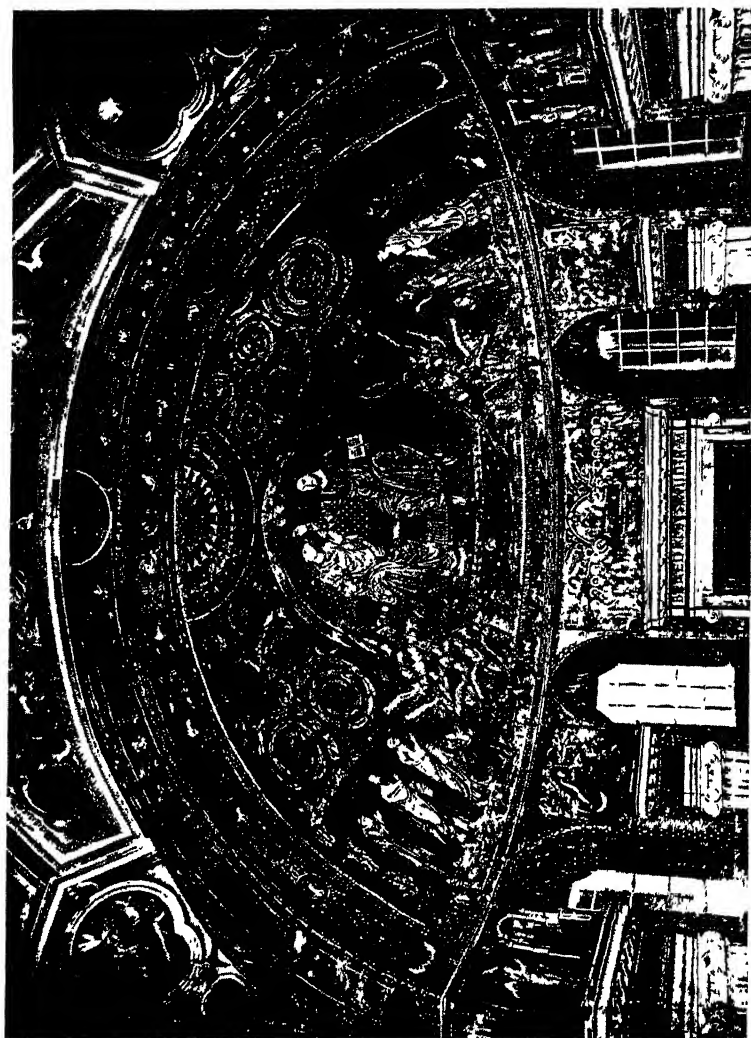
SINGING GALLERY (Detail)

Luca della Robbia



PIETA

Michelangelo



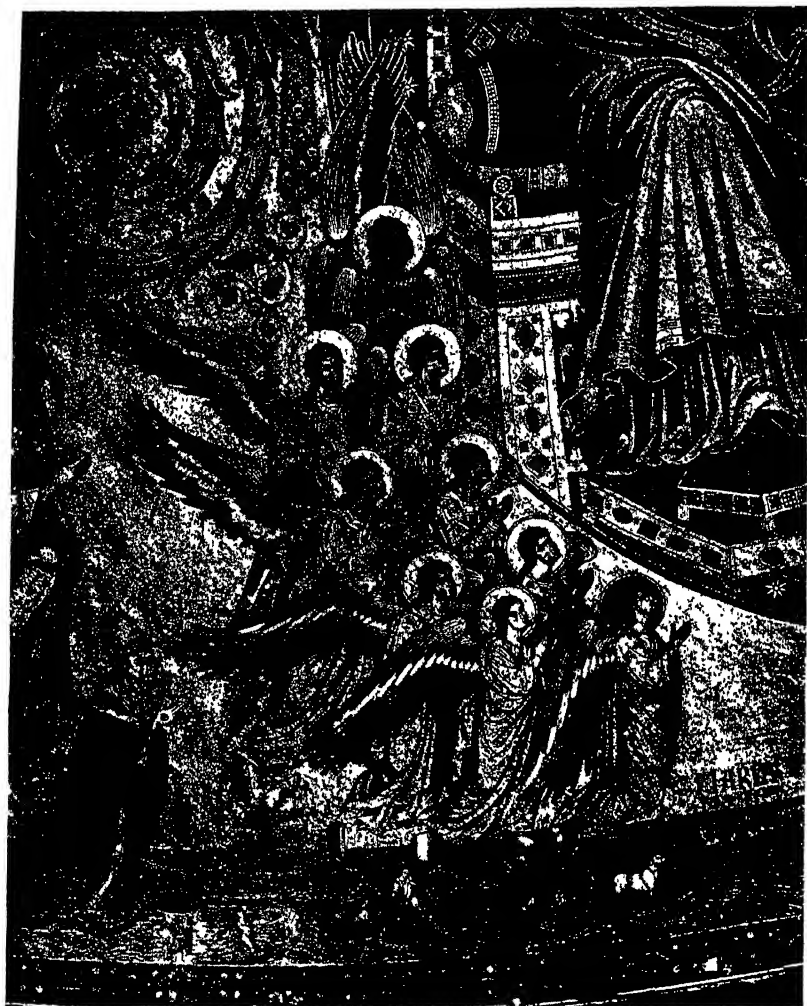
THE CORONATION OF MARY (Mosaic)

Jacopo Torriti



THE CORONATION OF MARY (Detail)

Jacopo Torriti



THE CORONATION OF MARY (Detail)

Jacopo Torriti



THE BEWAILING OF S. FRANCIS

Giotto



FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Giotto

subjects. The churches of the age began to be more expressive of paganism and secular pomp than of Christianity, and statues of saints might well have passed for pagan gods and goddesses. In painting, religious subjects were used as mere occasions for lavish representations of the luxurious life of the time, as, for example, in Paolo Veronese's "Feast in the House of Levi," or for the personal ostentation of the donor, as in the "Pesaro Madonna."

Then followed the devastating storm of the Reformation, which by its attempted substitution of a man-manufactured religion for the religion founded by Jesus Christ, dried up the main springs of spirituality, which are the only source of true art impulse. In the Counter-reformation, an attempt was made to win art back to the service of religion. The voluptuous Baroque was pressed in the service of the Church; a few painters recaptured something of the former spiritual fervour; but then came the Revolution, which shook the very foundations of religious society, and established economic conditions in which art could scarcely endure, and so, although revived, the drooping flower of Christian art has never been able, in succeeding centuries of destruction, unbelief, artificiality, and commercialism, to win back the pristine freshness or the strength and vigour of its youth.

Nicholas V, Savonarola, and even Raphael himself have been blamed by biased art historians for leading the art of the late Renaissance to the verge of paganism. The pope is accused of welcoming the Humanists to the Vatican; of condoning their faults and overlooking irregularities in their lives; of appointing Valla, "the Voltaire of the Renaissance," an Apostolic notary; and of being completely carried away by his enthusiasm for the new learning. His defamers take great care not to mention that he was a profound patristic and scholastic scholar; that he set his hand to the rebuilding of the Leonine City, the Vatican, and the Basilica of S. Peter; that he restored the "Aqua Virgo," originally constructed by Agrippa; that he sent legates all over the world to hold synods; that he founded the world famous Vatican Library; that he was free from the bane of nepotism; and that, even in the mistakes he made, his intentions were pure and his aims lofty and noble, his great ambition being to make Rome the home of literature and art, the bulwark of the Papacy, and the worthy capital of the whole Christian world. The defamers, too, of the memory of Girolamo Savonarola, who prate much of the "Burning of the Vanities," are not so ready to admit that he preserved the *Biblioteca Laurenziana* of Florence; or that, if he set his face against the prostitution of the arts, he always desired to see the arts consecrated to the service of morality and religion. To speak of Savonarola as one who roused the fervour of Florence to its highest point, who preached that

beauty was nothing, that the world was nothing, in comparison with the infinity of God, till art — finding itself powerless to express this overwhelming infinity — fell back on the classics, is as absurd as it is to speak of him as a mere ignorant iconoclast. Fra Bartolommeo, Lorenzo di Credi, Botticelli, Michelangelo, and other celebrated artists were his friends. So far was he from deprecating the beautiful in nature and art that he frequently explained to his congregations the true character of beauty, declaring that a holy soul actually participated in the beauty of God and diffused His celestial beauty through the body. Savonarola would have kept art on the confines of purism, but it was divided and fell, passing through the various stages of decadence of the Mannerists and the Eclectics till the artistic centre of gravity had shifted entirely out of Italy. To defend Raphael, the gentle, lovable, chaste Raphael against the charge of helping to further the spiritual decadence of art is unnecessary. Ruskin once well and beautifully said "all art thenceforward from the time when Christianity first settled over the conquerors of Italy is but the expression of their joy when they found the young Child with Mary His Mother," and Raphael was the painter, above all others, to whom the Blessed Virgin, symbolising all that was lovely of mind and body in woman made the greatest appeal. He lived and died a Christian artist, and should never be blamed for the weaknesses of his followers, who took for their type his works, who copied his style, but who were never sincere enough to believe in and follow his ideals.

Such, in a few paragraphs, is the inspiring yet depressing story of the rise and fall of Christian art. He must be a wise man, a veritable seer, who would dare prophesy to-day the trend art may take to-morrow. There are sincere and well-informed modern critics who believe they see in the poverty and barrenness of straight-line architecture, in the distortions in stone and concrete that now pass for sculpture, and in surrealist painting that represents the art of to-day, an honest attempt to get back to primitiveness, to dispense with the gathered encumbrances of the centuries, a sincere disposition to study first principles and general laws. It is strange but true, that the most perfect Gothic cathedrals were erected when the tide of mediaevalism was on the ebb; that the most sublime works of the greatest Italian masters were conceived and executed only when the noble edifice of Christian civilisation was slowly sinking in the quagmires of the pagan Renaissance; and that the noblest English dramatists, products of the Catholic Middle Ages, Shakespeare and Marlowe, flourished in the spiritually decadent era of Elizabeth. And so, too, it is not impossible for history to repeat itself, and — if our critics are correct in their belief — it is quite possible, through the influences

of the ever widening revival of Liturgical art, inaugurated by Pope Pius X, that an able and inspired band of Christian artists may, in this age of chaos, upheaval, confusion, and revolt, be able to create a new style of Christian art. An art that will stand for order and law against confusion and anarchy, for hope and courage against futility and despair, a new social and Christocentric style of art. An art that will be new in expression, not a slavish copying of the past, an art suited to our modern needs, but, withal, traditional in principle and content.

The estrangement between religion and art is not confined to-day to non-Catholic countries. M. Jacques Maritain complains bitterly of the glacial decrepitude of religious art in France, and cites an interesting passage from M. Dulas: "What afflicts one is to see our Mother, the holy Church, adorned with horrors. All that exhibits her to the world is so ugly, when she within is so beautiful"; and Maritain attributes this decadence to the prevalence of subjective Kantian philosophy. M. Alexandre Cingria, in his lectures to the Guild of Catholic Workers, at Geneva, takes the same line. Enumerating the causes of decadence in sacred art, he finds them partly in the spirit of indolence, untruthfulness, and lack of spiritual vitality, which has led to the moral deterioration of the Christian public; partly in the spirit of ennui, which, he declares, has infected sacred art which copies the weakest products of the Italian decadence. And he warns his listeners: "Nothing is so dangerous as to adopt the style of a past age and set it apart as *religious*. That is deliberately to drive all life from the churches and to make way for a hieratic art without greatness or beauty."

That religion is the main inspiration of all great art is the thesis of the first chapter of the present volume, in which, perhaps, the writer should have pointed out that even modern revivals of art have always been preceded by fervent and stirring revivals of religion. The work of S. Francis and S. Dominic begot the art of Giotto and the Florentine School; the mystical movement in Germany was connected with the School of the German Primitives; the Counter-reformation revival of religion produced Murillo, Rubens, and Bernini; and the Oxford Movement in England which brought forth Newman, Manning, and Faber, likewise produced Millais, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti.

It is not, however, with the decadence and fall of the Christian art of the past, nor with the rise of some new art of the future, but with the birth and blossoming of Christian art in the bosom of the Church that we are to concern ourselves at the moment. He who would read the epic story of the invention, the rise, and the development of painting must permit himself to

be led back, in the pages of this book, into the quiet past, back to the centuries of long ago, when life was largely the expression of religion and when good was encrusted with no uncertainties and evil mitigated by no doubts; back to those bygone times of happy memory, when as yet civilisation dozed on the stream of time and when Italy's saints and sages meditated by the banks of the Arno and the Tiber. He who would read the epic story of painting must permit himself to be led back to those golden days when, under the shadow of the Umbrian Mountains, the fields of ripening corn were disturbed only by the gentlest of warm summer breezes, and were never flurried by the swirling swish of the petrol-laden gusts of wind that follow in the wake of the speeding motor car of to-day. He must go back in spirit to the hills of Assisi, where gentle Francis, the lover and the friend of God, and man, and bird, and beast, with his newly gathered brethren, first took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and fed the poor and nursed the sick, and daily chanted the Holy Office with joyful hearts. For S. Francis has been styled, and not inaptly, the "Father of Modern Italian Art," and it was Giotto di Bondone who instilled into the earliest paintings of importance that have come down to us the world-influencing poetry of Franciscan Christianity.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DAWN OF THE RENAISSANCE

Florentine Art from Giotto to Fra Angelico

THE period from the birth of Dante (1265) to the deaths of Petrarch (1374) and Boccaccio (1375) may be styled the *Trecento*. This is true even though it includes the last quarter of the thirteenth century and excludes the closing years of the fourteenth, because it runs, in the history of Italy, from the downfall of German imperial power at the battle of Benevento, in 1266, to the return of the popes from Avignon in 1377. In the history of art, it is the epoch of the completion of Italian Gothic in architecture, the era of the followers and successors of Niccola and Giovanni Pisano in sculpture, the great period of pure Tuscan prose and verse in literature, and of the School of Giotto in painting. The *Trecento* saw the birth of the Renaissance, which is frequently spoken of as a single event, instead of as a series of movements spread over the centuries beginning with the crusades and the rise of the Friars.

Two of the outstanding personages in the first period of the world's awakening, when the nations of Europe were old enough to begin reforming their systems of government, and young enough to be but beginning to form their languages, were S. Francis and S. Dominic. The Poor Man of Assisi, although not notable for power of intellect or organising ability, literally shook the world with an inspiration which carried all before it. His gentle and saintly character and his universal love, which extended from popes and cardinals to criminals and lepers, and even to animals and birds, have made him for all time the typical exponent of Christian impulses. S. Dominic, although one of the most humble and most saintly men of his age, was endowed with gifts not given to S. Francis and may, in one way, be said to stand for the intellectual, as Francis stood for the spiritual side of the same gigantic wave of influence. One being the complement of the other, their two Orders, the Franciscan and the Dominican, were inspired to work for a

reincarnation of Christian thought, a revival of Christian faith, and a reorganisation of Christian society. Francis inspired, Dominic preached; Francis brought the element which imparted life, Dominic gave permanency to it; the Franciscans accepted training from the Dominicans, the Dominicans accepted poverty from the Franciscans. A tale of their time is that of the two steeds and the chariot: the Church was the chariot and the two steeds were Francis and Dominic. "If the illustrious Spaniard, Dominic of Guzman, and the wonderful man of Assisi did not occupy a place on our altars, there to receive the veneration of the faithful for their eminent sanctity," wrote Balmes, "they would deserve to have statues raised to them by the gratitude of society and humanity." The greatest men of the age, S. Louis, S. Thomas Aquinas, and Dante Alighieri, bore aloft the torch kindled by Francis and Dominic.

The rise and rapid growth of their two Orders mark the first break with the Middle Ages in the art of Italy and the beginnings of modern European art. Art to the painters who were disciples of S. Francis was not primarily decorative but a means of instruction, and their attention was centered less upon technique than upon subject matter. This influence is visible in Giotto and Duccio, who, at Florence and Siena, expressed the new genial creed of humanity and tenderness. With the rise of the Dominican Order, a more intellectual movement overspread the emotional religion of S. Francis, representing a greater enthusiasm for theological truth. The typical artist of the Dominicans was Fra Angelico, who "by the purity of his life, habitual elevation of thought, and natural sweetness of disposition," writes Ruskin, "was enabled to express the sacred affections on the human countenance as no one ever did before or since." Thus from four men of sanctity and genius, Francis and Dominic, Giotto and Angelico, was born the art of Florence.

The Florentine School of painting between Cimabue (1240-1302) and Michelangelo (1475-1564) is, in many respects, the finest and most interesting in the world. Athens was the first city of Greece; but Florence in her most opulent days was never the first city of Italy. Naples had a more beautiful situation, Genoa was more royal, although she produced great admirals and adventurers instead of artists and philosophers; Rome, the seat of the Papacy, was richer in great traditions and treasures of art; Venice possessed greater political power; and yet, in the three hundred years between 1230 and 1530, the history of these cities is in many respects quite colourless when compared with the history of Florence. The Florentine School boasts, with those of Giotto and Fra Angelico, such names as Masaccio, Uccello, Fra Filippo Lippi, Verrocchio, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Leonardo da Vinci, Fra

Bartolommeo, Albertinelli, Andrea del Sarto, Francia Bigio, and Michelangelo. To these might be added the names of many other illustrious painters — every one of them men of marked individuality of whom it would be impossible to make the barest mention in the present volume, which is intended to be a mere *outline* sketch of the history of religious painting in Italy. Likewise it would be impossible to deal even superficially with their works, which made the city of the Arno, Dante's "most famous and most beauteous daughter of Rome," the home of wonderful artistic, literary, and scientific movements, and the greatest centre of culture the world has known since Athens.

If the Florentine painters cannot equal the Venetians in depth and gorgeousness of colour, or the Umbrians in intensity of religious feeling, they surpass the greatest masters of these schools in an intense breadth and grandeur of conception and execution. The Venetians were great painters, but they were nothing more, whereas many of the Florentine masters were painters, sculptors, poets, architects, goldsmiths, scientists, and men of letters. They travelled extensively over Italy; they exerted a far-reaching influence on the schools of painting of other cities; and their fame brought the finest scholars and the outstanding artists of Umbria, Lombardy, and other provinces of Italy to their studios for training.

The Florentines were the first painters to approach and attempt to solve problems of primary importance. They believed that their paintings should represent things worthy to be represented; and they did not believe that technique is everything and the meaning of the work wholly secondary. Florentine art flourished in a free and prosperous area, where the political conditions of the state and the national character of the people combined to produce an intelligentsia composed alike of cultured aristocrats and ambitious peasants. It was an art formed by free men, by outstanding personalities, and undoubtedly, the most important of these personalities was Giotto di Bondone.

It has been stated again and again by certain historians and critics that before the coming of Giotto, Giovanni Pisano, and Dante, Italy was sunk in the depths of ignorance and barbarism. Surviving mosaics and frescoes show how mistaken is this idea that there was no great painting before Cimabue. While there were intervals of weakness, there were no gaps in the glorious history of the Church's nurturing and patronage of art. By the eleventh century, Romanesque art had been reborn in many parts of Italy; by the twelfth, Gothic architecture had been imported from France by the Carthusian monks, and in Italy, as in other European countries, an active

renaissance was taking place. At Naples and Rome the school of *marmorarii*, of which the Cosmati are the most famous, restored to life much antique beauty of form. Niccola d'Apulia, known as Niccola Pisano (c. 1200-1280), the pupil of artists, whose work marks the transition from the Romanesque to the Mediaeval Period, brought to Lucca, Prato, Siena, and Perugia, the classic tradition seen in the churches, castles, and ambones of his own province. The most perfect specimen of Niccola's art is, perhaps, the pulpit in the Baptistery of Pisa, on which he was at work in the year Giotto was born. The thirteenth century that gave the world some of its most magnificent cathedrals, with their wealth of architectural statuary, stained glass, enamels, carvings, metal and embroidery work; the century that witnessed the founding of national literatures and the establishment of some of our noblest universities, can now scarcely be regarded as a barbarous age! When we recall these events for the benefit of critics, and remind them of the mosaic workers, with the Franciscan, Jacopo Torriti, who surpassed all the contemporary Greek and Roman craftsmen, and with the artists responsible for the Baptistery of Florence; of the painters, with Pietro Cavallini, who created the fresco cycles in S. Maria-in-Trastevere in Rome; of the beautiful fountain at Perugia dating from 1278, or of the Ruccellai Madonna by Duccio of Siena, dating from 1285; they will, we hope, admit that we have submitted sound proof of a renewal of artistic spirit and power long before Giotto was born.

GIOTTO DI BONDONE (1266-1337), the first great Florentine painter and the founder of the Italian School of painting, was born at Colle, in the commune of Vespignano, in the valley of the Mugello, some fourteen miles from Florence. He was baptised Angiolo, after his grandfather, according to some accounts, but went by the diminutive name of Angiolotto, or, more simply, Giotto. In the modern sense of the word he received no education whatever. According to Lorenzo Ghiberti, the oldest historian of the Florentine Renaissance, and Vasari, and Leonardo da Vinci, who wrote half a century before Vasari, he was accidentally discovered by the famous Giovanni Cenni, known as Cimabue, the greatest Florentine painter of the age, who chanced to be riding by the place where the boy Giotto, while tending his father's sheep, was engaged in drawing one of his flock with a sharp piece of slate on the surface of a flat rock. Cimabue, then at the height of his powers and the first painter to dare to break away from the fixed type of Byzantine art, seeing an indication of genius in the young shepherd's drawing, took him as an apprentice to his own studio at Florence. Another story of the beginning of Giotto's career as an artist is given by an early commentator on

Dante. Writing some years before Ghiberti, he states that the boy was apprenticed to a wool-merchant of Florence, but that, instead of attending to his trade, he spent his time watching the artists at work in Cimabue's workshop, till at length his father approached the famous artist with a view to taking his son as a pupil.

Be these tales true or false, we know nothing definite about Giotto until he was nearing his thirtieth year, when Ghiberti, Vasari, and the later Franciscan historian, Petrus Rudolphus, all agree that he came to Assisi with his master, Cimabue, and there painted some of the frescoes in the nave of the Upper Church. Dante tells us in the *Divina Commedia* (*Purgatorio*, XI, 93) how the master was outdone by the pupil, who is called the reviver of painting, because he broke loose from Byzantinism and took nature for his guide. The poet's estimate of the painter was a true one. Giotto freed himself from the rude manner of the Greeks whose work had influenced Cimabue; he introduced the custom of drawing from living persons instead of merely copying types; he adopted for his characters appropriate actions and natural positions; and so became the first artist who introduced a rational and verifiable manner of painting.

After his work at Assisi, Giotto was called to Rome by Cardinal Stefaneschi to execute frescoes from the life of Christ for S. Peter's, which were destroyed in the time of Nicholas V. In Rome he also executed frescoes for Boniface VIII. Following his return to Florence, he painted "The Last Judgement" in the podesta; visited Padua to paint the "Capella dell' Arena," in the work of which a new phase of his realisation of the beautiful was to be seen; married Ciuta di Lapo del' Pela; and executed his most mature work in Florence and at Assisi in the Lower Church of the Basilica of S. Francis. In the closing years of life, Giotto designed the west front of the Cathedral of Florence, which was later destroyed, and its detached campanile, which stands to this day as a monument to his genius. He died, says Vasari, "beloved by all who knew him in life, regretted in his death by all who had ever heard his name," on January 8, 1337.

It would be impossible in the present volume to enter into either a detailed description or a critical analysis of the works of Giotto at Assisi. There is little undisputed information to rely upon as to the dates of his works at San Francesco, and no useful purpose could be served by entering the ranks of those taking part in a seemingly endless discussion. To those who wish to study the work of Giotto in detail, we unhesitatingly recommend as guides Thode, Burkhardt, and Berenson, and other eminent critics who have dealt exhaustively with it, while we must content ourselves here

with a passing reference to his style and the place assigned him in art by his own contemporaries and modern critics.

Giotto's style differs from that of his less illustrious predecessors in Italy and the great masters of the Renaissance period in his naïveté, his stark simplicity, his fearless search after all lovely and truthful things, and his passionate desire to depict things worthy of being depicted in a worthy manner. He would not, we may believe, have admired the painstaking efforts of the post-impressionists of our own age to catch the glint of sunlight on the side of a haystack, or of the realist to show us a rotting cabbage-stalk lying in the rainy gutters of a farmyard — these he would have deemed unworthy subjects for his brush. Furthermore, his style differs from that of his predecessors and his successors in his substitution of lighter and purer colours than had been in use before the time of his master, Cimabue, and his use of a greater variety of tints. Finally, it differs in the introduction into his compositions of an amount of natural detail never before attempted.

He has been called "the last of the great colourists," but he knew little about the *gradations* of colour, and so failed to obtain the utmost beauty of colour only obtainable by the perfect gradation of light and shade. Less spiritual and more rugged and manly than some of the contemporary Sienese painters and less idealistic than his great successor, Fra Angelico, Giotto painted what he saw with all the force of his fine mind and with all the artistry at his command.

Boccaccio wrote of this great Florentine in his *Decameron*: "Giotto was such a genius, that there was nothing in nature which he could not have represented in such a manner that it not only resembled, but seemed to be, the thing itself." Centuries later, Leonardo da Vinci assigned to him that importance which is still his to-day. "A painter," he wrote, "will produce works of but poor quality who takes for his guide the paintings of others; but if he will learn from natural objects, he will bring forth good fruit. This we may see exemplified in the later Roman painters, who by continually copying the works of others from age to age hastened the decay of their art. After these came Giotto, the Florentine, who acquired such a degree of skill as to surpass not only the artists of his own time, but all those of many ages past." In our own day, Ruskin hails him as "a daring naturalist in defiance of tradition, idealism, and formalism." If we think that Giotto does not merit these flattering tributes because his buildings are sometimes in anything but correct perspective; because his hills are mere, bare, jagged rocks; because some of his trees have only a few leaves for foliage, and because they are out of all proportion to his human figures, we should make haste to remem-

ber that to his contemporary, Boccaccio, the introduction of natural objects of any description into paintings was an astounding innovation, and that, if his figures are compared with those of the painters of preceding generations, their truth to life and their natural expression easily explain the surprise and delight of his contemporaries. We should also remember that he was brought up as a boy to perform simple rural tasks, out in fresh meadows and under warm blue skies. This no doubt accounts for the strong sympathy with nature he retained to the end of his days, and for the delightful custom of introducing animals into paintings and the sculptures on his campanile. To Ruskin, who had minutely studied the works of the early Byzantine painters, Giotto's realism and daring were worthy of the highest praise. No painter ever made such an impression on his age as Giotto, and from his time down to the death of Titian, the whole history of painting is mainly the history of the principles exemplified in his works. A great deal of the best art of to-day is based on principles derived from him and his immediate successors. Indeed, the best works of the pre-Raphaelites would never have been conceived and executed, had it not been for Giotto's defiance of formalism and the artistic revolution he initiated.

Among the Florentine successors of Giotto were Taddeo Gaddi (1300-1366), who had spent over two decades of years in Giotto's studio and assisted his master in most of his later works; Giovanni da Milano, one of Taddeo's assistants; Tommaso di Banco, called Giottino, because he had acquired something of the spirit and personality of the grand master himself; Agnolo Gaddi, the son of Giotto's former pupil, Taddeo; Cennino Cennini, famous for his *Treatise on Painting*, which deals in lavish detail with fresco and tempera alike, describes the technique of Giotto, and further gives us a valuable insight into the habits and customs of the Florentine artists of that age; Andrea Orcagna, the best of all the Giotteschi painters; Antonio Veneziano; Pietro di Puccio of Orvieto; Spinello Aretino; and Lorenzo Monaco. But pre-eminent amongst all these stands Andrea Orcagna who was, next to Giotto himself, the greatest Florentine master of the century.)

The son of a goldsmith, and like Giotto, poet, painter, architect, and sculptor, Andrea Di Cione, called ORCAGNA (c. 1308-1368), was born in Florence. Pupil in painting of his brother, Nardo, Orcagna matriculated in the painters' guild in 1343; he studied sculpture, it is believed, under Neri Di Fieravante or Andrea Pisano. By the year 1352, he was recognised as the greatest Florentine painter who had arisen since the death of Giotto, and as such was employed on extensive works in S. Maria Novella. He attempted to carry out the maxims of his illustrious predecessor, and, although he did

not possess Giotto's power, some of his dignified and well-proportioned figures may be said to be more graceful and more carefully draped than some of his master's. There is in his style a combination of the soft qualities of the Sienese with the grand severity of the Florentine school.

His frescoes have suffered, like the works of the majority of the primitive painters, so much from time and restoration that it is very difficult to judge to-day of their original qualities of colour. Of these frescoes "The Judgement," "Paradise," and "Hell," are still to be seen in the Strozzi Chapel, S. Maria Novella. We are told by Lorenzo Ghiberti that Nardo completely repainted the last named, and we learn from another source that Ghirlandaio painted over the frescoes of "The Life of the Virgin." But, if we are to believe Vasari, who says that Ghirlandaio drew his inspiration from the happy "inventions of Orcagna," or in other words, that Ghirlandaio painted *over* Orcagna's compositions, then we have evidence enough of his powers of invention, of his improved knowledge of perspective, and of his accuracy in the modelling and grouping of figures.

The chief paintings of Orcagna now left to us are a "S. Matthew," painted in collaboration with his brother for S. Maria Novella; a "Virgin with Angels"; a "Vision of S. Bernard"; and a "Coronation of the Virgin" executed for S. Piero Maggiore, Florence, now in the National Gallery, London. In the Oratory of Our Lady is to be seen a magnificent specimen of Orcagna's work as sculptor, known as "San Michele in Orto," "S. Michael in the Garden," completed by Orcagna about 1359, for the *Laudesi* of our Lady. This was a sodality of laymen who gathered every evening to sing *laudi* in honour of Mary, and who were renowned for their charity even in mediaeval Florence, where charity as well as all the other virtues (and vices) was on a heroic scale. For richness of architecture and brilliance of decoration, the tabernacle erected for their shrine is perhaps the most perfect work of its kind in the whole range of Italian Gothic art. To Rumohr is due the credit of first discovering that the name given to this artist was "l'Arcagnuolo," the Archangel. This was corrupted by Vasari into Orcagna, and by that name he is known to this day. Orcagna stands in the middle and Fra Angelico at the close of the century following Giotto. Fortunately for us, we have had preserved for us enough of the works of the great Dominican friar to enable us to judge him for ourselves and measure his worth as an artist — as we can now never hope to judge Orcagna.

It would be most unfair to the reputations of some of the early Florentines to say that no progress was made in painting, that painting existed in vain, from the death of Giotto till the coming of Masaccio. "Giotto still holds the

field," wrote Benvenuto da Imola, Dante's commentator, in 1376, a century after the death of the great Florentine, "for no greater artist than he has arisen, although his works contain many faults." Leonardo da Vinci is even more unfair and more sweeping in his statements. "After the days of Giotto, painting declined again," he writes, "because everyone imitated the pictures that were already in existence, and thus it went on until Tommaso of Florence, surnamed Masaccio showed by his perfect works how they who take any teacher but nature—the mistress of all masters—labour in vain." These expressions of opinion should be taken guardedly, for in the century following Giotto's birth considerable advance had been made in landscape painting, in perspective drawing, and in facial expression. Within a century of Giotto's death, the world had been given not only the works of the Giotteschi, but the greatest works of Masolino, Fra Angelico, Andrea del Castagno, Paolo Uccello, and Domenico Veneziano.

The impulse towards naturalism given to Florentine painting by Giotto brought into existence two principal schools of painting: the psychic, and the physical. The leaders of the latter school bent their energies towards attempting to solve problems of technique. They devoted their time to the study of linear and aerial perspective, to the study of anatomy, and to discovering the reality of facts in animate and inanimate objects. To those problems none addressed themselves more assiduously than two immediate and important predecessors of Fra Angelico: Paolo Di Dono, called Uccello and Tommaso of Florence, called Masaccio.

UCCELLO (1397-1475) was born at a time when the science of perspective was the chief object of research among the great masters. Having learnt its rudiments from the mathematician, Giovanni Manetti, Uccello devoted himself so intensely to this science that the great sculptor, Donatello, his intimate friend, pointed out to him that he was forsaking art for science and taking the shadow for the substance. Indeed, the perspective appears to be the end and object of some of Uccello's pictures, instead of a means of assisting the illusion. At all events, the third dimension in space, only suggested experimentally and symbolically by Giotto, was conquered by him. For this very reason what is left to us of his works are worthy of the most attentive and careful study. The perfection to which Uccello ultimately attained is well represented in the equestrian figure of Sir John Hawkwood in the Cathedral of Florence. Among the most prized possessions of the National Gallery of London is one of his great battle pictures, "The Rout of San Romano," in which we see in the figure of the fallen knight an example of Uccello's efforts at drawing a foreshortened object in perspective. This picture is one

of three panels painted for Cosmo de' Medici to celebrate the defeat of the Sienese by the Florentines at the battle of San Romano in June, 1432. The most striking figure on the white horse has been identified as Niccolo da Tolentino, the leader of the Florentines, who directs the attack with his marshal's baton. His page or armour-bearer rides behind him. They are not helmeted with the visors closed, as they should and doubtless would have been, but for the fact that Uccello wished to paint their portraits. One of the treasures of the Louvre is a panel portrait of Uccello painted by himself. It is associated with those he executed of Giotto, the painter; Brunelleschi, the architect; Donatello, the sculptor; and Manetti, the mathematician.

Uccello's absorption with technique made him indifferent to the uses and the truths of colour. He painted horses red and would as readily have painted them any other shade. Although, artistically, he accomplished little, yet without the knowledge he acquired and bequeathed to his successors the world might have had longer to wait for its Leonardo da Vinci and its Michelangelo.

Tommaso, now known as MASACCIO (1401-1428), the son of Ser Giovanni di Simone Guidi, a notary, was born, between Arezzo and Florence, in 1401. From childhood he was so endowed with extraordinary natural gifts that, under the influence of such men of genius as Ghiberti, Donatello, Brunelleschi, and due to the training given him by his master, Masolino (who began the Carmine frescoes, and with whom, on account of the similarity of their names, he is frequently confused), he rose to a summit of excellence in fresco painting hitherto never reached by any Florentine artist. Fresco painting is one of the most interesting fields of activity in the whole range of Italian art. It is a form of art which Italy may almost be said to have made her own, and in the Carmine frescoes of Masaccio it made its first important advance. Spain glories in the masterpieces of Velasquez and Murillo; Belgium in Van Eyck and Rubens; Holland in Rembrandt and Franz Hals; but not one of these masters, or the masters of the later French and English Schools, has ever properly understood the painting of vast wall surfaces. Giotto in Florence, Assisi, and Padua; Masolino and Masaccio in the Carmine; Fra Angelico in San Marco; Filippo Lippi in Prato and Spoleto; Gozzoli in six different cities of Italy; Mantegna, Ghirlandaio, and Signorelli are but a few of the Italians who experimented in this impressive form of painting, which reached its perfection when Raphael, in the Camera della Segnatura, accomplished the triple task of illustrating artistic, humanistic, and religious sentiment; and when Michelangelo, with all his verve and Dantesque intensity, pictured the judgement of mankind.

Masaccio, one of "the inheritors of unfulfilled renown," the first great painter of the Renaissance, bears much the same relation to the fifteenth as Giotto does to the fourteenth century, and the frescoes of the Carmine play the same part in the history of painting as the famous bronze gates of the Baptistery in that of sculpture. Masaccio was engaged on frescoes in the Brancacci chapel of the Church of S. Maria del Carmine, in Florence, according to some of the historians, in 1424, and according to others in 1426, so that he could not have been more than twenty-four years of age. "Adam and Eve Driven out of Paradise," "The Tribute Money," "The Healing of the Sick," "S. Peter Giving Alms," and "S. Peter Baptising," are now generally ascribed to him. In the last-named fresco one figure, which appears shivering with the cold, obtained a world-wide celebrity, and, according to the Jesuit art historian, Lanzi, marks as it were an era in art. These frescoes, which Masolino had begun, Filippino Lippi was destined to finish because of Masaccio's untimely death. In the eighteenth century the greater part of the church was destroyed by fire, but the chapel was saved, although the frescoes were badly damaged both by the flames and by subsequent restorations.)

The Brancacci chapel became the centre of attraction for all Italian and foreign artists. Filippino Lippi, Verrocchio, Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Perugino, and later Michelangelo and Raphael came to study the frescoes. Ingres said the chapel should be "regarded and venerated as the paternal mansion of the great schools," and Sir Joshua Reynolds hailed Masaccio as one of the great fathers of modern art. His penetrating insight into nature, his scientific perspective and foreshortening—in which he greatly excelled Uccello, the nobility of his grouping, his excellent draperies, the accuracy of his drawings, and his grasp of light and shade, while being appreciated by his contemporaries, were not as loudly vaunted and extolled as they have been by some modern critics, who hold that for sheer dignity some of Masaccio's figures were never surpassed by any artists till the coming of Michelangelo and Raphael. But these writers should remember what Masaccio owed to his master, Masolino; and that Giotto and his followers had long since given painting its first impulse towards an intelligent representation of nature, which was bound, as it did in the art of Masaccio, to produce great results. Masaccio stands in the history of art half-way between Giotto and Raphael; and it has been well said that he was "the heir of one and the teacher of another great master."

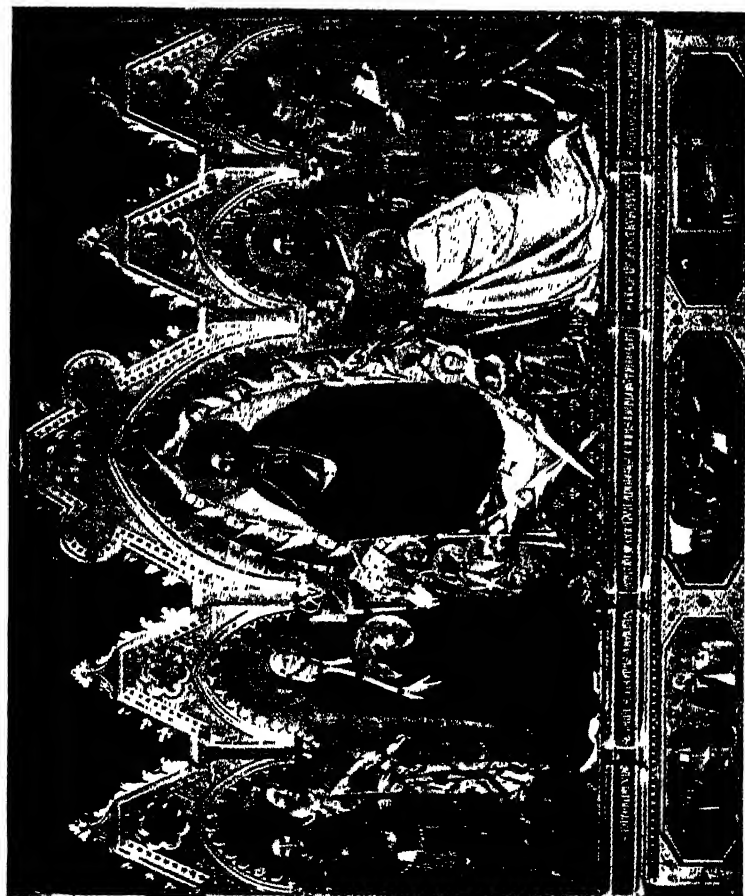
Masaccio may be said to have completed the work Giotto had begun. He freed Italian art from the mannerisms of the later followers of Giotto, even as Giotto freed art from Byzantine formalism. The return to nature, which

drew from Leonardo da Vinci his frequently quoted tribute to Masaccio, is seen in the landscapes of these frescoes, notably in the background of "The Tribute Money," but above all in his study of man and the human form. "For the first time," says Kugler, "his aim is the study of form for itself, the study of the external conformation of man. With such an aim is identified a feeling which, in beauty, sees and preserves the expression of a harmonious development of the powers of the human frame."

From Masaccio's time onwards, there branched out and flourished, as already mentioned, the two contemporary lines of development in Florentine painting, the one born of the painting tradition of Giotto and the other the offspring of the art of sculpture as represented by Donatello. The former leads us, through Fra Angelico, to the art of Filippo Lippi and Sandro Botticelli, and on to that of Albertinelli and Andrea del Sarto. The latter leads us, through Paolo Uccello and Andrea del Castagno, to the art of the Pollaiuolo, and, through Verrocchio and Ghirlandaio to Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. As we have chosen the paintings of Masaccio to represent the period's noblest and most finished illustrations of realistic or physical art, we can offer no better paintings than those of Fra Angelico to illustrate psychic or symbolic religious art.

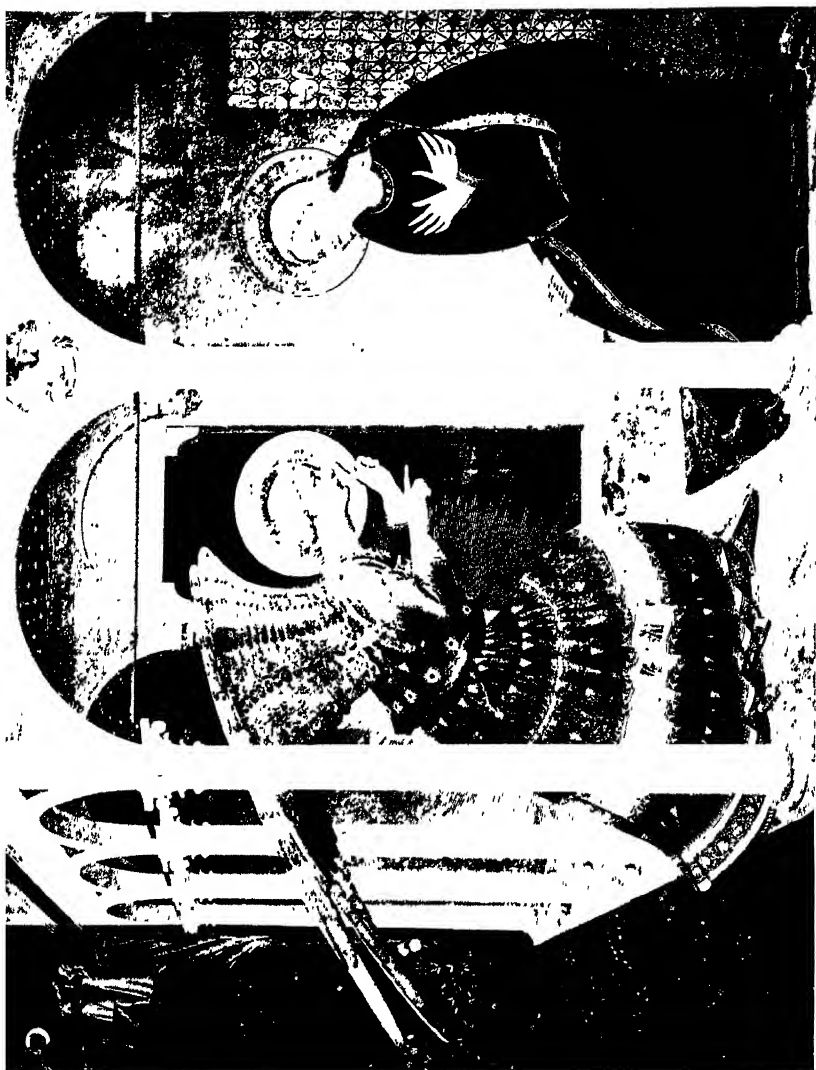
Guido da Vicchio, or Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, known to fame as FRA ANGELICO (1387-1455), the purity, joyousness, and spiritual exaltation of whose art has become proverbial, was born at Vicchio, in the province of Mugello, not far from Vespignano, the birthplace of Giotto. Of his early years we know little or nothing save that his father's name was Pietro. He joined the Order of Friar Preachers, entering the Dominican Friary at Fiesole in 1407, and from that time his life may be divided into several very distinct periods. His early years were spent at Fiesole, where he learnt to illuminate missals and choir books. From 1409 till 1414 he was at Foligno and then for four years he was at Cortona. Returning to Fiesole, he worked there and at San Marco's in Florence where he left some thirty works in the cloisters, chapter house, and cells of the convent. Finally he went to Rome where he worked for Eugene IV and Nicholas V.

The paintings of Fra Angelico are to be seen to-day in London, Paris, Berlin, and in Rome, Perugia, and other Italian cities, but Florence still treasures the greatest number of his works. There, in the Accademia, in the Uffizi, and in San Marco, the traveller standing before his pictures will scarcely notice the gentle Dominican's lack of anatomical knowledge or the mistakes in perspective of one who was not a modern but a typical painter of the transition from the Mediaeval to the Renaissance periods, so impressed



Andrea Orcagna

ALTAR-PIECE



Fra Angelico

THE ANNUNCIATION



RUCCELLAI MADONNA (Detail)

Duccio



THE ANNUNCIATION

Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi

will he be by the ineffable sweetness and beauty of Angelico's paintings. In them the kingliness of Christ, the maternity of Mary, and the joyousness of the blessed have found their most beautiful expression. His Uffizi "Coronation of the Virgin" is the work of a Trecentist, the work of a Gothic miniature painter with exquisite delicacy of touch. In no other artist's conception of a heavenly throng, of an assembly of angels and saints gathered round our divine Lord and His Virgin Mother, have spiritual happiness and heavenly peace been expressed with greater tenderness and naïveté. With her hands modestly crossed over her breast, the Blessed Virgin is seated in mid-air on clouds, turning towards her Son, who with His right hand places the crown upon her head. A glory of golden rays emanates from this central group and illuminates the surrounding choir of angelic musicians. Below, in a semi-circle, are grouped some fifty saints, men, and women.

Fra Angelico lived in a formative age of wonderful endeavour and achievement and in a period of great men. Brunelleschi, who designed the Duomo of Florence, the cloisters of San Lorenzo, the Sagrestia Vecchia, and the Church of S. Lawrence, was but ten years older than Angelico; Donatello, Ghiberti, Michelozzo, and Luca della Robbia belong to the same period; and Masolino, Masaccio, Uccello, Andrea del Castagno, and Domenico Veneziano were among the painters of his own time. He was, undoubtedly, influenced by the achievements of some or of all these men of genius, but we have no authentic information as to his master. Some critics give that honour to Starnina, the miniature painter and mosaicist, others to Lorenzo Monaco, the Camaldolese monk, a native of Siena, who was attached to the Convent of S. Maria degli Angeli in Florence; but, most probably, he learnt to mix colours in the studio of some unknown local painter, followed Giotto's example and took nature for his guide, and went out into the flowering fields around Cortona and taught himself to draw the roses and pinks he loved so well, and there, in the early morning skies, first beheld the vivid golds, the greens, the blues, the creams, and the crimsons which were never afterwards absent from his palette. His love of nature remained unchanged throughout his life, and, although the backgrounds of some of his masterpieces glow with the gold of the Byzantines, he was the first Italian to paint a landscape that can be identified.)

Fra Angelico was singularly fortunate in being removed from Fiesole to Foligno in Umbria, while in the first stage of his artistic development. It was at the time he left that the Florentine School was entering upon its new phase of development, in which devotion and religious feeling were no longer to be the first objects, but were to be supplanted by the desire for

perfection of form. So it came to pass that the devotional feeling of his pictures was not only preserved intact, but deepened and strengthened by the art of "Umbria Santa" with which he now came in contact. In the second stage of his development, he corrected many of his early defects—witness his San Marco frescoes—getting more life and suppleness into his figures and restraining his great love of ornament in the details. Finally, in the third stage, he acquired a simple grandeur of style, greater mastery over the arrangement of his figures, and greater knowledge of the effects of light and shade. He vastly improved the dignity and perspective of his imposing architectural distances, and increased the vigour of his drawing without ever losing the spirituality, the purity, and devotional feeling of his earliest works. The art of many of the great masters of the Renaissance, Perugino for example, deteriorated as they advanced in years, but Fra Angelico as he grew older, like Raphael, went from strength to strength. One of the sights of the Vatican to this day is the chapel of Nicholas V, decorated by Angelico in 1450 with frescoes illustrating the life and martyrdom of SS. Lawrence and Stephen. Painted in his sixty-first year, these remarkable works display a vigour superior to that of his youth. Although in immediate proximity to the famous stanze of Raphael, these frescoes, in virtue of their air of perfect devotion and calm contemplative worship, excite the enthusiasm of all true admirers of Christian art.

The influence exercised by the works of Dante over all the painters of the mystic school was of a far-reaching character. Giotto, who was the friend and associate of the poet, may be said to have illustrated the *Divina Commedia* by his brush, nor was Angelico insensible to the influence of his poetry. "Dante mated the doctrine of S. Thomas to the harmony of his verse," says Marchese in his work on the Dominican painters, "and I would venture to affirm that Angelico incarnated and coloured the conception of these two great men. If we compare his pictures with the writings of the philosopher and the poet, we shall have little difficulty in detecting the identity of thought that characterised the three Italians in their theories of the supernatural, and the imagery in which they clothed them." To this we may be permitted to add that a study of the writings of Dante and the pictures of Fra Angelico will give the inquiring student a splendid idea of the Catholicism of the Middle Ages, and enable him to form an excellent opinion of the extent to which the theology of S. Thomas, made popular by the genius of these two great men, diffused its influence over all classes of society, and was helped to find new ways of exercising its dictatorship of Christian philosophy.

Fra Angelico was "a man of simple habits and most saintly in all his

ways," says Vasari, "he kept himself from worldliness and was so good a friend to the poor that I think his soul must be already in heaven. He worked continually at his art, but would never paint anything except sacred subjects. He never took his pencil up without a prayer, and could not paint a crucifixion without the tears running down his cheeks." This sincerely written eulogy proves conclusively, we think, that Fra Angelico combined with his love of nature a deep and charitable love of his fellow men, and a passionate and abiding love of almighty God. To Fra Angelico, painting was merely a means to an end, and that was the glorification of God. The depths of his religious feelings and the purity of his soul enabled him to depict with exquisite tenderness the Virgin Mother of His Saviour to whom he so frequently prayed, the dead Christ on Calvary over whose sufferings he so poignantly wept, and the hosts of adoring angels and saints for whose company he so ardently longed. He approached his easel with the same reverence that he approached the altar of sacrifice, he painted a picture with the same spirit of devotion and spiritual elation that he experienced when he celebrated morning Mass. To him the crucified or the triumphant Christ, the Virgin-Mother, and the saints and angels he loved to portray were no figments of imagination. To him they were as real as were his own white-clad brethren with whom he daily sang the Office in the choir of San Marco.

Fra Angelico has his limitations and, like every human being, his faults. If his angels are so beautiful that they appear to be truly beings of Paradise, his devils are so harmless that they appear almost ludicrous. "His pictures of martyrdom," says Muther, "create the impression of boys disguised as martyrs and executioners; and his bearded men, weeping like women, are equally incredible. But when he does not leave his proper sphere, and the problem is to portray tender feelings, a great and silent joy of the heart, a holy ecstasy or tender sadness, his pictures have the effect of the silent prayer of a child." *The silent prayer of a child*. What a lovely thought; and how true! A prayer is what Angelico would have wished each of his pictures to be; a prayer to lift the heart of the spectator from the painted, make-believe vision of beauty he had created to the real vision of supreme beauty, God himself. Fra Angelico died in Rome in 1455 and was buried in S. Maria sopra Minerva, and Pope Nicholas V himself wrote his epitaph. Although the Church has never officially canonised him, the world of to-day, almost five hundred years after his death, still regards him — as his own Dominican brethren and the poor of Florence regarded him in the long ago — as a saint.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BIRTH OF MODERN PAINTING

The Art of the Early Sienese Artists

THE connexion of the Dominican Order with Christian art dates almost from its foundation, for it was in 1278 that the first stone of the church of S. Maria Novella at Florence—the church that Michelangelo called “his gentle and beautiful bride”—was laid with imposing ceremony. This church will ever possess an interest for the student of art, because it was for S. Maria Novella that the “Ruccellai Madonna” was painted by Duccio di Buoninsegna, the chief founder of the school of Sienese painting. Vasari’s story of the painting of this world-renowned picture by the Florentine, Cimabue, was for long accepted without question, but the discovery in the archives of Florence of a contract drawn up for the painting of this picture, dated April 15, 1285, between Duccio and the rectors of the Confraternity of the Virgin, places the authorship of the “Madonna” beyond all doubt. Even that portion of Vasari’s story dealing with the procession of the jubilant populace of Florence, carrying the picture in triumph to the church, has been proved a fiction. There was, however, a triumphal procession for Duccio’s “Maesta,” or “Madonna of Majesty,” which was borne to the Duomo in Siena, on June 9, 1311, by the Council of Nine, the bishop, the clergy, and a great multitude of people singing canticles. There is nothing extraordinary about such a manifestation of enthusiasm for art in the days of Duccio and his contemporaries of the early Sienese School, because religion was then the fountain source of the artist’s inspiration, and painting was still employed only as a means of moral teaching worthy of a Christian people.

There existed, we know, in the chief cities of Tuscany, in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, little native schools of painting. But at their best they represented but poor and feeble forms of art, as may be proved by an examination of any of the still-extant works of painters like Giunta of Pisa, Margaritone of Arezzo, and Guido of Siena. It was not till after the

capture of Constantinople, in 1204, by Venetians and the armies of the fourth crusade, when the Greek artists of Byzantium found their way to Sicily, Pisa, and Siena, where they decorated many churches and introduced miniature paintings, that new centres of art were formed from which was born the art of Duccio and his Siennese contemporaries.

In the churches of S. Pietro and S. Petronella in Siena, there were pictures which were regarded as very old three quarters of a century before Duccio was born. But the accounts of Siena's pioneer painters are so confused by the plurality of the Guidi, the Memmi, the Lippi, and the Vanni—which are merely abbreviations for Giacomo, Filippo, Giovanni, and such Christian names as were then used without a surname—that a great many paintings in the Accademia delle Belle Arti of Siena to-day are anonymous, or are simply labelled "School of Siena."

It is most unfair to the reputations of these early artists to assert that during the Middle Ages painting and sculpture seemed to have become little more than a complement to architecture with which they joined hands, as though to form a single art, in the Gothic cathedral. Painting and sculpture were always distinct and separate arts. It is a fact, however, that in planning, building, decorating, and furnishing the cathedrals, not only the several arts but the artists themselves seemed to renounce all individuality by working together, without proclaiming their names. But this should not prompt modern critics to assert that the early Tuscan artists thought so little of their art, of their paintings, that they left them unsigned. Should not the reputations of such artists be enhanced by their humility?

To our mind this is a proof that their art was Christo-centric, not ego-centric, and that they thought as thought the Scholastics, of whose impersonalism my friend, Dr. Arthur Ryan, has so ably written: "How few personal details we have, for example, of such outstanding men as S. Albert the Great or S. Thomas of Aquin. It is largely by accident that we can write their biographies, for they were interested, not in themselves, but in the great heritage of wisdom which they received, and which they handed on with anything they could add to it. How different from the present, when too often the philosopher aims rather at breaking with tradition than at perfecting it, and prefers originality to truth; when the outstanding figures of society often display, even to indecency, their personal history and habits to the morbid curiosity of the mob. How noble in comparison is the tranquillity and reserve of the great master-minds of the Middle Ages, who did their work quietly and well without regard to the plaudits of men, who shunned the clamour of controversy, and often left the scene without a

genealogy or an epitaph, like those knights of mediaeval chivalry who went down into the arena to try their lances, and went off after the joust with the mask of their visors still lowered, leaving nothing behind but an enigmatic device."

Sieneese painting, whether the work of the Sieneese themselves or of their Byzantine teachers, was more traditional than inventive and was evolved from earlier miniatures and mosaics. Even the later and greater native artists of Siena, who worked contemporaneously with the Florentines, never lost the finer qualities of their Byzantine teachers. The Sieneese were a self-centred people, and were not endowed with the breadth of vision of the Florentines. This accounts to some extent for the facts that some of the best work of the Sieneese is to be found in small, tempera, easel pictures, whereas some of the best work of the Florentines is to be found in large and imposing frescoes. And so, those of this generation who tour the various European galleries and view in its entirety Italy's wonderful contribution to Christian art, and especially to painting, can see clearly that even as the Florentine masters are renowned for their breadth and grandeur of conception and execution, the Umbrians for the intensity of their devotional sentiment, and the Venetians for emphasising the functional importance of colour, the Sieneese masters, too, have a claim to a special place in the history of painting. They founded an important, if short-lived, school of painters remarkable for their beauty of line and delicate grace of figure composition, for their evident delight in rendering decorative schemes, for their splendid technique, for the beautiful designs of their gold backgrounds, and for careful representations of rich embroideries and all other ornamental embellishments.

Of these Sieneese masters Duccio (c. 1255-1319) was the earliest. Although he derived his technique from the Byzantine masters, he modified their methods in interpreting scenes of quiet rapture and holy peace. His work had a marked influence on the painters of Pisa, on the Umbrian masters of Perugia, Gubbio, Fabriano, and Orvieto, and on early Florentine masters such as Lorenzo Monaco, Andrea Orcagna, Spinello Aretino, and Fra Angelico. Even some of the early efforts of Benozzo Gozzoli show glowing reflections of the spirituality, finesse, and decorative richness of the school Duccio founded. Duccio gave what might be called the beginning of final form to what had been merely traditional in the previous centuries of Christian art. For this reason he is regarded as the last great painter of antiquity.

Duccio di Buoninsegna was to Sieneese painting what Giotto di Bondone was to Florentine painting: its pioneer and awakener. All Sieneese art is the development of Duccio's art, just as all Florentine art is the development of

Giotto's art. The aim of Giotto, as already stated, was to endow painting with the actuality of life, and the aim of Florentine painting, founded in the study of nature and the antique, became the perfect representation of life. The aim of Duccio was the representation of a more purely aesthetic ideal. He was, strictly speaking, a more spiritual painter than Giotto, for he invariably subordinated considerations of art to considerations of religion. Through him Sienese painting, founded on the art of Byzantium, which cared little for realism, became not the representation but the expression of life.

When George Francis Bently designed London's Westminster Cathedral in the Byzantine style of architecture, he designed a sacred edifice in a different way from that of the architect who first conceived S. Peter's in Rome. His intention was different; it may not have been less lofty or less noble or less inspired, but it was different; and it would be as illogical to compare the art of Duccio with that of Giotto as it would be to compare these two great cathedrals; for they are in different categories. Of the art of Duccio or of all Sienese art, it can be said that ancient forms of composition and earlier methods of execution were too tenaciously followed and that the essentials of composition and form were neglected in a pursuit of symbolism, detail, and ornamentation. We can see in the art of Duccio, and through him in the art of Siena, the principle that underlies the art of Japan, whereas we see in the art of Giotto, and through him in the art of Florence, an art essentially European in its derivation and the heir of the art of the Greeks.

Duccio di Buoninsegna was born between 1255 and 1260, when Siena was at the height of her political power after her defeat of the Florentine armies at the battle of Montaperti. All attempts to discover the name of his master have failed, and it is believed that he was the pupil of Greek artists who worked in Pisa, Siena, and Florence. Perhaps he studied with the artists of his native Siena, for from the earliest times Siena had artists, of whom some were outstanding. But whoever and whatever his master was, Sienese or Greek, mosaicist or miniaturist, Duccio proved to be an apt pupil, because he brought the Byzantine manner to its utmost perfection for the purpose of religious illustration. Mere picturesqueness of detail in form and colouring was not the main object of the painter's study in the thirteenth century. The aim of men like Duccio, Simone Martini, Lippo Memmi, Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, and other early Sienese artists was to embody religious, we might say, theological ideas. The brush of the artist was guided by the theologian, and was devoted to the representation of some doctrine or devotion. To show how close the connexion was between the successors of

Duccio and Giotto and eminent contemporary theologians, we have but to mention that while Andrea Orcagna was employed on his frescoes in S. Maria Novella, representing the terrors of the *Inferno*. Simone Martini was illustrating the mysteries of the Church Triumphant and Militant; and that the unity of design and teaching for which these works are remarkable is due to the fact that the ideas and mode of treatment were all suggested by Fra Jacobi Passavanti, the author of *The Mirror of True Penance*. These frescoes set forth the Church and the world as the Friar Preachers conceived of them, even as Giotto's allegories at Assisi show us the same through Franciscan eyes.

His greatest work, his reredos for the high altar of the Duomo of Siena, which he began in 1308 and finished some three years later, is not one picture but a gallery of pictures, large and small, enhaloing, as it were, the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of heaven and earth, and Protectress of Siena. Some of these panels are separated and missing, some are mutilated, and some are injured by neglect and attempted restoration, but still this picture—when newly finished, and glowing in the gold and rich colours so dear to the hearts of the Sienese—must have been worthy of the contemporary chronicler's description. "It was the most beautiful picture that was ever seen or made," wrote Andrea Dei, "it cost more than three thousand golden florins, and Duccio, the painter, laboured many years in doing it." The prayer of the saints who kneel at the Madonna's feet might not inaptly have been the prayer in Duccio's own inscription: *Mater Sancta Dei, sis caussa Senis requiei, sis Duccio vita, te quia depinxit ita*.* "Holy Mother of God, be cause of rest to Siena, be life to Duccio, for he painted thee thus."

An examination of the other not-numerous examples of Duccio's work still extant, specially those in Siena and London, reveal that, while he aimed at emotional expression, beauty of design, and decorative eloquence, he was not, like Giotto, a student of nature, and that he was sprightly where Giotto was slow-going. Indeed, one would be led to believe, by a hasty and perfunctory comparison of their works, that the Sienese master was far in advance of his Florentine brother artist. But Duccio never broke away from Byzantine formalism, although it might be said that he was about to begin to do so, for he gave an appearance of life and movement to his pictures by the very strong and lively expression of his faces, and by making the lines and shadows of his draperies more graceful and emphatic. The draperies, for example, of his "Christ Healing the Blind Man," in the National Gallery,

* The *a* and *u* in *caussa*, the *t* in *te*, and *de* in *depinxit* are now obliterated.

London, are wonderfully arranged and seem to fall in natural folds, but it is evident that they were not drawn by an artist possessing even a rudimentary knowledge of anatomy. Duccio occupies a unique niche in the great edifice of Christian art, and, standing as he does between the old and the new worlds, he may be regarded as being to the Middle Ages what Raphael was to the Renaissance. He was the pioneer from whose smouldering torch the Lorenzetti were to kindle the flame of the new religious art in emotional Siena, and hand on the fire to the more scientific Florentines, and thus help them to make the city of Arno one of the three great art centres of Christendom.

Probably the best analysis of Duccio's extant work is that of Berenson. He admits that Duccio gave to the mediaeval mind all it demanded of a painter, and pays tribute to the sublimity of Duccio's conceptions, to his depth of feeling, to his extraordinary skill, and to his ability to compose as few painters but Raphael ever composed. But if these tributes imply that Duccio, who was a good Catholic, was also, in his way, a great innovator, how then reconcile them with the charges so frequently made against the Church that she attempted to strangle the art of painting in its infancy, and having failed, that she attempted to cripple it in its growth, by assigning it one object, by prescribing restricting rules for its exponents, and by legislating exactly how artists should and should not paint.

While we are of the opinion that the Church was right in relegating art to its proper subordinate position, we do not believe for a moment that the conservatism and hieratic formalism of pre-Duccian religious painting was due to the Church's legislation. We believe that art had to pass through a long course of evolution. Its growth was not miraculous; it had to await the human development of human faculties with time, or the stimulus it received from the rare appearance of men of genius specially endowed with the creative spirit. The hieratic formalism of pre-Duccian painting was due in great measure to the slothfulness of the minds and the lack of skill of the hands of Duccio's predecessors, who indolently contented themselves with slavishly and mechanically copying the hieratic productions of the early Byzantine artists. That the innovating and creative faculty was never denied by the Church to religious painters is proven by the fact that she encouraged and patronised and honoured both Duccio and Giotto and their successors. It is proved also by the words of Durandus, author of the famous *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, who expressly states: "The various histories as well of the New as of the Old Testament are depicted according to *the inclination of the painters*. For to painters as to poets *a license has ever been con-*

ceded to dare whatever they pleased." The italics are ours. The Church has never shown any desire to impose the severer rules of ancient taste on those with whose devotion these rules have ceased to harmonise; to pin down Catholicism in art to the taste of any particular century; or to limit Christian art to one form of expression. She did not, for example, resist the Renaissance style of the fifteenth century simply as being a departure from that of the Middle Ages or from the antique ecclesiastical type. To hold such a principle as worthy of veneration and imitation would be a dangerous mistake, calculated to foster that insidious error so inseparable from an heretical spirit, namely, the inclination to petrify truth into some particular form arbitrarily chosen, denying to the Church her power of adopting every variety of style and system and moulding them to her eternal purpose. Or it would be above all to encourage that disposition to exalt antiquity over the Church's living authority, which argues but a cold sympathy with her in matters of feeling.

There was no question of orthodoxy involved in the struggle between Mediaeval and Renaissance art. But when the Church saw the danger lurking in the revival of a style associated with the paganism of Greece and Rome, she used her power to annul the evil by consecrating the classic forms to Christian purposes. One secret of the great strength of the Church lies in her power of absorbing into herself all popular emotions and pressing them into the service of the faith. She has retained her mastery over the world by guiding and directing its varying forms of popular enthusiasm rather than by crushing them out of existence, and even as she raised the fabric of Christian chivalry from the military enthusiasm of a semi-barbarous age, and later overcame the rationalism of the schools by adopting their system to her own scheme of Christian philosophy, she became the patron of the best artists of the Renaissance and identified their greatest works with the associations of Christian worship. Indeed, far from attempting to strangle the art of painting in its infancy, or even to turn it from naturalistic tendencies, her popes, generation after generation, called to Rome and patronised every great artist of the Renaissance from Giotto to Michelangelo.

The greatest of Duccio's followers was SIMONE MARTINI (c. 1284-1344) sometimes called Simone Memmi, who was born, it is believed, in Siena, in 1284 or the following year. He is now regarded by the majority of art historians as having been a pupil of Duccio. Vasari's statement that he studied under Giotto was probably but another of the Florentine writer's efforts to shed lustre on Florence at the expense of Siena. Simone married, in his fortieth year, the daughter of the painter Memo di Filipuccio and sister of

the Sienese painter, Lippo Memmi. He painted his great fresco, "Virgin and Child Enthroned in Siena," in 1315; his altar-piece for the Church of S. Catherine in Pisa in 1320; a similar work for the Dominican Convent in Orvieto in the following year; his celebrated equestrian portrait picture of Guido Riccio da Fogliano, the great Sienese generalissimo, in 1328; and later, though the exact date is not known, he was invited to decorate the hexagonal Chapel of S. Martino, in the Lower Church of S. Francesco at Assisi.

A man of outstanding personality as well as a fine painter, Simone Martini was the friend of Clement VI; of Petrarch, the poet; and of Robert of Anjou, King of Naples. In 1339 Simone left Siena, with his wife and brother, to reside at the Papal court at Avignon, where he first met Petrarch, and there painted the portrait of Laura, whose praises Petrarch has sent down the ages. Robert of Anjou, visiting Siena in 1310, greatly admired the work of the Sienese artists, and after the canonisation of his brother, Louis, in 1317, he desired to perpetuate his memory. He consequently invited Simone to Naples to paint an altar-piece for one of the churches of his capital city. Faded but still beautiful, the Sienese master's "The Crowning of King Robert by his Brother, the Bishop of Toulouse," may be seen in the Church of S. Lorenzo Maggiore at Naples. Simone Martini died in 1344. Sienese records date his funeral as taking place on August 4 of that year, but there is doubt as to whether he died in Siena or Avignon.

Simone Martini followed worthily in the footsteps of Duccio. With an exquisite sense of beauty, a love of sumptuous colour, flowing line, and jewel-like decorative effects, he is perhaps the most typical master of the school that for a time vied with and bade fair to eclipse the great School of Florence. Simone was one of the first painters to attempt to create female types of beauty of an angelic serenity; indeed both Andrea Orcagna and Fra Angelico are indebted to him for some of their seraphs.

In one of the rooms of the Palace of the Commune, in Siena, now a law-court, variously called the Sala del Balestre, the Sala del Mappamondo, and the Sala del Gran Consiglio, the whole wall, above the presiding judge's seat, is occupied by the vast fresco, already mentioned, "Virgin and Child Enthroned in Siena." The majestic, regal, and sweet-faced Madonna is seated on an elaborately decorated throne, and, though her form has not yet lost its Byzantine stiffness or rigidity, she turns her head slightly—with the gesture characteristic of many of Simone's Madonnas—to the kneeling angels who offer her flowers on behalf of the four saints: Ausanus, Savinus, Crescentius, and Victor. Ghiberti has written that the work, when newly finished, was "right marvellously coloured"; but the fresco suffered damage

from damp and had to be repainted by Simone six years after its completion. The ravages of time and restorations have now left little of the original work except the outlines which still show the grace of his draughtsmanship. The same remarks apply to the portrait of Guido Riccio da Fogliano, on the opposite wall, which has been repainted. Simone's best works in fresco are, perhaps, the two scenes from the life of S. Martin, where he depicts the saint celebrating Mass, and the Emperor Julian girding him with a sword. In them we can see that he brought to painting a new richness of colour, a dignity of form, and a larger sense of design—expressed in greater and more natural freedom of gesture and a more flowing grace of line—than was ever attempted by Duccio.

The two pictures, however, by which Simone is best known are his "Christ Bearing the Cross," in the Louvre, and his "The Annunciation with S. Ausanus and S. Juliet," in the Uffizi. The first of these shows our Lord, preceded by executioners, soldiers, and two children, carrying His cross to Calvary. He is attended by a concourse of people in which may be recognised His mother, in blue robes, followed by S. John. S. Mary Magdalen, bulky of form and out of proportion to the other figures, in red robes, with her hair tumbling about her shoulders, may be seen behind the cross, raising her hands in grief and horror. The faces of the characters depicted in this tempera painting are varied and life-like in expression, but it is not a well-balanced composition. The figures seem to straggle across the space they are intended to fill; the grouping is sentimental and not dramatic like the grouping of the best frescoes of Giotto—the painter to whom he corresponds more closely than to Duccio. This painting is an excellent example of the practice, prevalent in the early decades of the fifteenth century, of representing figures walking or standing on tiptoe. Masaccio, whose study of the human form and knowledge of perspective we have already mentioned, was among the first painters to place the feet of his figures firmly on the ground and foreshorten them properly.

The serene beauty of the faces of some of Simone's Madonnas: the miniature-like delicacy of their features, and the winsome sweetness and spiritual loveliness of their whole countenances, are characteristic of the best of his work. An excellent sample of this is the second of the two pictures we have just mentioned, his Uffizi "Annunciation." This tempera painting, a triptych in an elaborately carved and decorated Gothic frame, is ornamented with busts of the Four Evangelists. In the centre the Blessed Virgin, seated on a throne-like chair, and holding a book in her left hand, receives a message from the kneeling angel of the Annunciation. In compartments to the left

and right respectively are standing the figures of S. Ausanus and S. Juliet. The central scene is remarkable for the tenderness with which it was conceived and executed. The great humility of the modest Virgin is emphasised by her half-frightened, shrinking action; and the distinctly Eastern linear rhythm of her garments, far from conjuring up visions of our favourite classic or modern ideals, turns our thoughts once again to the art of China and Japan. In giving examples of Simone's power as a creator of beauty, we must not omit mention of the figure of the youthful Christ in his "Christ Found in the Temple," in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, for in the whole range of European art there is no more beautiful conception of the boy Christ.

Two of the best Sieneſe artists and outstanding fresco painters of the early half of the fourteenth century were the brothers Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, whose art is intensely individualistic. Although akin to that of Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi, it bade fair to raise the school of their native city to equality with that of Florence. PIETRO LORENZETTI (c. 1280-1348) appears in Siena in 1305 as the painter of an altar-piece. After this no trace of him is found till 1326. He was probably a pupil of Duccio or Martini, and is one of the first Sieneſe painters to be touched by outside influences. He was strongly influenced, as was his brother, by the works of Giovanni Pisano and Giotto; for by 1329 he had abandoned the dark Sieneſe colouring for the light flesh tints and warm shadows of the Florentines. Pietro was a close imitator of nature, and is noted for the spirited action of his figures. He was especially fortunate in representing strong expression on the faces of the men he painted. Specimens of his works are to be found in Arezzo, Cortona, Milan, Rome, and in Assisi where his frescoes in the Lower Church of S. Francesco (wrongly ascribed by Vasari to Cavallini, the Roman painter), represent scenes from the Passion, and "The Madonna with S. Francis and S. John the Evangelist." Pietro is also represented in the Vatican Gallery and in the Uffizi by the "Madonna and Child with Angels," painted in 1340 for S. Francesco at Pistoia, which has been so much restored that it can scarcely serve for the study of his style. But by far the greater number of his paintings are to be found in Siena, in the Opera del Duomo, the Spedale, in S. Francesco, S. Pietro Ovine, the Servi, and in the Accademia delle Belle Arti, where there are some fifteen paintings or fragments of his work.

AMBROGIO LORENZETTI (c. 1300-1348), who was active between 1323 and 1348, is with his brother Pietro the only Sieneſe who nearly approached the high excellence of Giotto in composition. Their works are so nearly alike in some cases that they are with difficulty distinguished from each other.

Ambrogio is, like his brother, well represented in Siena, where may be seen the well-known "Annunciation" which is definitely his work entirely. His three immense allegorical frescoes, illustrative of the advantages of justice and peace, and of the evils of tyranny, or "The Effects of Good and Bad Government," in the Palazzo Pubblico, remind us that the Lorenzetti were innovators not only in their efforts to express in form and line the new movement in Renaissance painting, but in their attempts to glorify, among other things, the ideals of civic life. These mark a great departure from the usual religious subjects which were the main themes of all the painters of the early Byzantine and Italian Schools. Ghiberti mentions "The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple," which Ambrogio painted in 1342, and which may still be seen in the Accademia in Florence. Ambrogio Lorenzetti is Siena's greatest master. In material beauty and spiritual significance he reaches a height unattained by any other Italian painter of his century, with the exception of Andrea Orcagna. The brothers Pietro and Ambrogio are thought to have perished in the plague of 1348.

Other fourteenth-century Siennese painters, worthy of careful study, are Lippo Memmi (?—1356), the brother-in-law and chief assistant of Simone Martini, specimens of whose work may be seen in Florence, Siena, Orvieto, and elsewhere in Italy and in some of the European galleries; Bartolo di Fredi (1330-1410), a follower of Memmi, over a dozen of whose paintings may be seen in Accademia delle Belle Arti in Siena; Andrea Vanni (1332-1414), the partner and companion of Bartolo di Fredi, whose fine triptych of "S. Michael, S. John the Baptist, and S. Anthony Abbot" is a treasure of the Siena Gallery, and whose name is dear to Catholics the world over as the friend and painter of one of the most remarkable women Italy or the world ever produced—S. Catherine of Siena; Taddeo di Bartolo (1362-1422), the earliest specimen of whose art, an altar-piece painted in 1390 for San Paolo of Pisa, is now in the Louvre, and whose "The Death of the Virgin," although spoiled by time and repainting, is remarkable for the beauty of its composition and decorative spacing; and Stefano di Giovanni, called Sassetta (1392-1450), whose art greatly influenced the work of other Siennese masters, such as Sano di Pietro and Matteo di Giovanni. Lastly, we may mention the Umbrian masters, Benedetto Bonfigli and Piero della Francesca, of whose works we shall speak elsewhere in this book. Taddeo di Bartolo, referred to above, was one of the painters who appeared to give a new fitful gleam of life to Siennese painting at the end of the fourteenth century, but with the death of the Lorenzetti the short-lived School of Siennese painting fell into a decline from which it never really recovered.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BEGINNINGS OF OIL PAINTING

Florentine Art from Andrea del Castagno to Cosimo Rosselli

DURING his all-too-brief life Masaccio influenced his contemporaries to a greater degree than any master since Giotto. At the time of his death, Florentine painting was in the hands of five great artists: Paolo Uccello and Fra Angelico, of whose achievements we have made brief mention; Andrea del Castagno, Domenico Veneziano, and Filippo Lippi, painters of an entirely different calibre and outlook. Their works, while still breathing the faith of the Middle Ages, stand definitely as specimens of the art of the Early Renaissance.

Art historians have inseparably coupled the names of Andrea del Castagno and Domenico Veneziano, as Dante did those of Ugolino and his enemy Archbishop Ruggiero, and for the same reason—one is supposed to have been the victim of the other's treachery. The much-debated question of the introduction of oil—in place of tempera or fresco—painting into Italy is bound up with their story. According to Vasari, Domenico Veneziano learned, when in Venice, the secret of oil painting from Antonello da Messina, to whom it had been given by Jan van Eyck in Flanders. On Domenico's return to Florence, so runs the tale, he commenced to paint in oils and astonished everyone with the brilliancy of his colouring. Andrea del Castagno, thereupon, cunningly persuaded his friend to impart the secret of his method of painting. Then, prompted by jealousy of the superiority of Domenico's work in S. Maria Nuova, and wishing to remain the sole possessor of his secret, he murdered his fellow artist. This story, for long universally accepted, has been dismissed. The researches of Milanesi have proved it to be without any foundation in fact. Indeed, since the two painters never worked simultaneously in this church, and Domenico survived his supposed murderer by some four years, it is generally agreed that Vasari

mistook Domenico Veneziano for another painter, Domenico di Matteo, who was actually murdered by a political enemy in Florence in 1457. But if the mystery of the alleged murder of Domenico Veneziano has been cleared up in a satisfactory manner, the same thing cannot be said of the still disputed point whether the Florentine artists did derive the secret of oil painting from him.

In the list of expenses for painting the frescoes in S. Maria Nuova is set forth the item of linseed oil, supplied in large quantities to Domenico di Venezia. But, on the other hand, some of those who have examined his "Madonna with Saints," formerly in S. Lucia de' Bardi and now in the Uffizi, declare that it is painted in tempera, with no trace of oil. From this it would appear that, if Domenico used oil to temper his colours for fresco painting, he was only following a practice which had frequently been employed before his time (the use of oil as a medium is mentioned by Cennino Cennini in his famous treatise on painting), but that in panel painting he could not or would not use it.

The invention of oil painting, as we know it to-day, or the question as to the use of oil in painting, has been discussed *ad nauseam* by almost every notable writer on art, both as to the exact date when it was first introduced, and as to the method in which it was used. This much we know: linseed oil was no doubt used in painting in the eleventh century. Mention is made of it in Rugerius' *The Schedule of Different Arts*, which refers to the preparation and application of pigments both for oil, tempera, and fresco painting. Chemical analysis of the paintings of Giunta and his contemporaries, renowned for their brilliancy of colouring, proved the brilliancy to be derived from wax, a vehicle employed by the Greeks in encaustic painting, but this practice declined towards the end of the thirteenth century and was succeeded by that of tempera. About 1437, oil was used by Andrea Cennini in the background of his pictures both in colour and gold. There are also other records of oil being in common use as a medium in England, France, and Germany before the time of Van Eyck.

The new system of painting was first practised in the south of Italy by some of the Neapolitan artists and pre-eminently by Antonello da Messina. This artist, according to some historians, seeing a painting by Jan van Eyck, in Naples, determined to study at Bruges. Returning to Messina in 1465, he remained there some seven years and then took up his residence in Venice where he introduced oil painting to Domenico Veneziano. But it would not, we now know, have been necessary for Antonello to go to Flanders to learn the Van Eyck method of painting, for not only were Flemish pictures



VIRGIN WITH CHILD, SS. MICHAEL AND FRANCIS

Lippo Memmi



ALLEGORY ON GOOD GOVERNMENT (Detail)

Ambrogio Lorenzetti



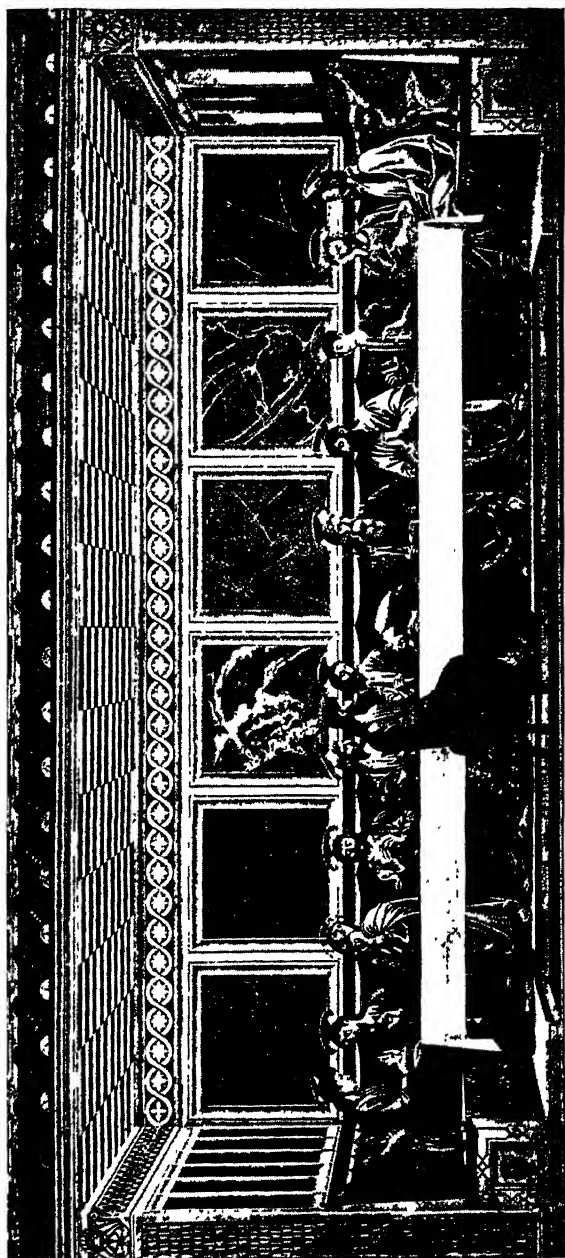
VIRGIN AND CHILD

Alesso Baldovinetti



MADONNA IN ADORATION

Fra Filippo Lippi



THE LAST SUPPER

Andrea del Castagno



THE BAPTISM IN THE JORDAN

Andrea Verocchio

brought into Italy, but distinguished scholars and disciples of Van Eyck, such as Roger van der Weyden, Memling, Hugo van der Goes, and Justus of Ghent worked in Italy in the middle of the fourteenth century. Alesso Baldovinetti, the master of Ghirlandaio, and Pesellino are mentioned by Vasari as foremost among the artists who experimented in oils and varnishes as vehicles for their colours. But in order that all men should honour Antonello da Messina as the *first* oil painter, his admirers caused this tribute to be inscribed on his tombstone: "This earth covers Antonello the painter, the chief ornament of his native Messina, and of all Sicily, celebrated for ever by artists with the highest praise, not only in his pictures in which there was a singular art and grace, but also because he first, with his colours mixed in oil, gave to Italian painting splendour and durability."

ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO, or Andreino (1390-1457), as he is called by Giovanni Santi in his *Chronicle*, and by Albertini in his *Memorials*, was born in the valley of the Mugello, near Florence, in 1390. Baldinucci conjectures that he was the pupil of Masaccio. Certainly he was profoundly influenced by Donatello. He was one of the first realists, and is to be praised for his energy, his truth to nature, for giving his figures movement and expression, and his faces individuality.

The close study of nature, as we have already pointed out, was the aim of the generation that followed Masaccio. Andrea's figures are gaunt and forbidding and, at times, coarse and unpleasant, his colouring is hard and crude; but his drawing is accurate, and the power and reality of his types, notably in his portrait of Dante, are so undeniable that he is entitled to a place among the greatest masters of his age. "You have crucified a peasant," Brunelleschi is said to have told Donatello, when he was shown that master's wooden crucifix, now preserved in Santa Croce. The same remarks might be made with truth of the figure of our Lord in Andrea's "Crucifixion with the Virgin and Saints," now in the Uffizi. This crucifixion scene was painted in fresco on a wall in the cloister of the Camaldolese Monastery of S. Maria degli Angeli, and was rescued in a very damaged condition from under a coat of whitewash. The cross is shown in the centre of the foreground on a mound, with skull and cross-bones on the ground, and on it hangs our Saviour painted with coarse realism. The same spirit and vigour mark the artist's equestrian portrait of Niccolo da Tolentino, in monochrome, which actually imitates sculpture and was executed as a companion to that of Sir John Hawkwood. But in neither the warrior nor the steed does he approach the standard of Paolo Uccello.

What has been called, perhaps wrongly, Andrea's bitterness of spirit,

brought about by the hard struggles of his early career, is evident in many of his works. By degrees, however, his circumstances improved, his talent obtained recognition, and in 1453 he was commissioned by the Florentine Government to paint upon the walls of the podesta portraits of Peruzzi and the Albizzi, who were declared rebels after the return of Cosmo de' Medici. From this he derived his surname of Andrea degli Impiccati (of the hanged). He was also employed to design stained glass for the cupola, and to paint cherubs and lilies on the organ of the Duomo. But his chief work at this period was the decoration of the Villa Pandolfini, which excited the admiration of Albertini. The latter regarded it as one of the finest samples of Renaissance decorative design. The hall in which the work was executed has long since been destroyed, but Andrea's portraits of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, and of other famous Florentines, were safely transferred to canvas, and now hang in the Museum of S. Apollonia. One of the best known of this master's works is "The Last Supper," which may still be seen in the refectory of this one-time convent. Of this painting we shall speak later in connexion with "The Last Supper" of Leonardo da Vinci.

Andrea del Castagno died in August, 1457, and was buried in the Annunziata, where as recently as 1899 and 1902, frescoes said to be by him have been discovered. The first of these discoveries is a fresco of S. Jerome and two women saints adoring the Blessed Trinity, and is characteristic of the almost brutal manner in which he conceived some of his subjects.

That DOMENICO VENEZIANO (c. 1400-1461), was an artist of rare distinction is a fact we need not accept on the bare word of the historians and critics. Although his most important works—his figures in the Casa Baglioni, his frescoes in S. Egidio, and another series which he and Piero della Francesca were invited to paint in the Holy House of Loretto—have perished, we can still pause to examine for ourselves his "Madonna and Saint," painted for the Church of S. Lucia de' Magnoli and now in the Uffizi. This picture, a typical Quattrocento work, represents the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Child, with S. John the Baptist and S. Francis on one side, and S. Nicholas and S. Lucy on the other. While the figures cannot be said to be perfect in structure and balance, we recognise in them something more than a trace of Fra Angelico's charm: in the pose of the Blessed Virgin, in the natural attitude of the Child, and in the bright and attractive colouring. This "Madonna and Child with Saints," a predella-piece; "The Martyrdom of S. Lucy," now in Berlin; and the frescoes in the National Gallery, London, exhaust the list of extant works now left to him by the critics. Although from contemporary documents Domenico's art was held in high esteem in

the middle of the century, nothing is known of his early life or his training. His known works prove him to have been influenced by Donatello, Masaccio, Fra Angelico, and Andrea del Castagno. Domenico Veneziano's claims to fame do not begin and end with his own paintings; he was the teacher of the great Umbrian painter, Piero della Francesca, and of Alesso Baldovinetti who, as the teacher of Ghirlandaio, the Pollaiuoli brothers, and Verrocchio, exerted a profound influence on the next generation of artists. As such the name of Domenico Veneziano will never be omitted from any serious description of the development of Florentine art; but a greater artist than either Andrea del Castagno or Domenico Veneziano was Fra Filippo Lippi.

Because Fra Angelico and FRA FILIPPO LIPPI (1406-1469), were both members of religious orders, or because they were till then the most famous painters the religious orders had produced, their names have been as constantly, as they have been incorrectly, coupled in some of the not-too-carefully written hand-books on the history of art that abound to-day. Indeed, the saintly and cloistered life of this most illustrious member of the Dominican Order presents, in almost every respect, a deep and marked contrast to the restless and erratic life of the Carmelite monk.

As it was with their lives so it was with their art. In Angelico's day, in the first half of the fifteenth century, Christian tradition remained supreme in art, and never were sculptors and painters more profoundly influenced by religious motives. Expression of thought and emotion and the purest spiritual feeling, rather than perfection of form, were the aims of the art of Donatello, Luca della Robbia, and Fra Angelico. But in Filippo Lippi's day, in the later half of the century, a new spirit had entered into European art. Although painting still remained in the service of the Church, artists became absorbed in the examination, study, and representation of the outward appearance of things, and began to learn to express all the various manifestations of the human form as well as its surroundings. Lippi, in fact, although only half-heartedly in sympathy with the scientific tendencies which characterised the painters of the new generation, was to carry still further the advance made by Masaccio and to give a great impetus to the new realism.

Although acquainted with all the then known technicalities of his art, Filippo Lippi continued to work in tempera and carried this form of art to the highest point of perfection. He came to be regarded as the greatest colourist of his age. Giotto used blues, crimsons, and scarlets in large simple masses; Fra Angelico used gold and a number of pure tints that contrasted with each other and with his sharp black and whites; Masaccio followed his

great exemplar, Giotto, in grandly using simple colour masses; Domenico Veneziano got something of the solemn splendour of the ancient mosaics into his paintings; Andrea del Castagno's colouring was hard and crude, suited, if you will, to the grim sculptural austerity of the types he painted; Uccello devoted himself solely to his scientific pursuits — to him colour massings were of little or no importance; but in the works of Fra Filippo Lippi we see the beginning of the breaking of one tone into the other, the beginning of tone-blending. We see the striving after the softness, richness, and delicacy of individual tones and their relations to each other, in which Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci afterwards excelled. He was the most romantic painter of his time, and had an intense love of the beautiful, gay, and joyous in all animate nature. He rejoiced in colour, in sun-drenched landscapes, in flowers, in splendid architecture, and in rich ornament. He delighted in producing charming forms and many of the graceful aspects of physical life.

From the little authentic knowledge we possess of his life, it is not unfair to assume that he would have failed as a merchant — he was the son of a butcher — as ignominiously as he failed as a monk. The biographies of that wonderful character Giorgio Vasari, artist, architect, and art historian, whose name stands out prominently, be it for praise or censure, on the pages of every history of Italian art that has been written since the publication of his famous *Lives*, are undoubtedly mines of information, but like many mines they contain much dross as well as a percentage of gold. In telling the story of Filippo Lippi's life, Vasari has not been kind to the painter, but, on the other hand, modern criticism has not been kind to Vasari.

There comes to mind, in this connexion, the old story of the two men who approached a statue from opposite sides and quarrelled because one said that the shield carried by the bronze figure was made of gold, and the other said it was made of silver. Greatly incensed by each other's obstinacy, they drew their swords and fought so viciously that both fell helpless to the ground, bleeding of many deep wounds. Only then did they learn, from a compassionate wayfarer, who came to their succour, that the shield had gold on one side and silver on the other. Most probably there was gold as well as dross in the makeup of Filippo Lippi. Most probably there was a good side as well as a bad side to his character. Certainly, the researches of Milanese, Venturi, and later scholars into Vasari's writings should prompt us to take, with the proverbial pinch of salt, his lurid and colourful version of the life of this monk without a cloister or a rule, with its accusations of broken vows, seduction, aimless wanderings, theft, and loose living. Vasari, it is

known, was a man of strong and bitter prejudices, and he has been proved to have been unjust and inaccurate in relating so many important events in the lives of some of the Italian painters, that he may, some modern critics believe, have grossly exaggerated the faults and failings of this very human, temperamental, and extraordinarily gifted artist.

Of many, even of some of the main, events of Filippo Lippi's strange life there is doubt, but there is no doubt as to his ability and worth as an artist. He descended in the direct line, through Fra Angelico and Masaccio, from Giotto, while from Angelico he learnt to give, when he so wished, expression of serenity and devotion to his figures, and to practise the bountiful use of colour and flowers. Louis Gillet says his art is like a window looking out on a flower garden and exhibiting all its beauties. "No one draws such lilies or such daisies as Lippi," wrote Ruskin. From Masaccio he learnt to achieve, in some of his works, that distinctive breath of treatment, peculiarly of perspective, and simplicity in the presentation of character and circumstances for which they are noted till the present day. He studied Masaccio's paintings so attentively in the Brancacci Chapel, that Vasari tells us it was as if the spirit of Masaccio had entered the body of Filippo. Lanzi remarks that, if Filippo was not the actual pupil of Masaccio, he was the pupil of his works. No painter of his time did more to bring art closer to life and to make it the true mirror of reality than Filippo Lippi. He was among the first to introduce the element of sensuous beauty into sacred pictures, by taking the prettiest faces he saw around him for his Madonnas, and by painting angels more suited to the market-places of Florence than to the courts of heaven! Some of his sacred subjects are treated in a realistic style that detracts from their dignity. He paints some of his saints in the Florentine garb of the time, and selects anything but intellectual types as his models, but this was but a phase of his development.

Between 1452 and 1464, Filippo Lippi executed, beside several pictures in the Prato Museum, his frescoes at the cathedral. These are regarded as the chief work of the second generation of the Renaissance, before the decorations of the Sistine Chapel and the fresco work of Ghirlandaio in S. Maria Novella. The best known among them are the scenes representing the "Feast of Herod with the Dance of Salome," and "The Death of S. Stephen," the former noted for the rare arabesques of its draperies, and the latter for its evidence of his love of stately architecture. In the evolution of the Renaissance, Filippo Lippi played a great and important part as his early and descriptive paintings inspired Benozzo Gozzoli, and his frescoes of the Prato and Spoleto, the works of Ghirlandaio and Botticelli. But in the end

Filippo Lippi never approaches Fra Angelico in giving to his greatest works an atmosphere of celestial purity or an intensity of pure religious feeling. The religious devotion expressed with such charm in the sweet, thoughtful countenances of both the Blessed Virgin and the Angel Gabriel in Fra Angelico's "Annunciation" in Florence, is absent from Filippo Lippi's painting of the same scene in the National Gallery, London, notwithstanding Lippi's increased technical dexterity.

If Vasari is correct and if in Tuscany, in the new learning-crazed Florence, Fra Filippo Lippi sinned, surely he must have made amends in holy Umbria, for when he died there — while executing his noblest and most strongly conceived frescoes of the death and coronation of the Blessed Virgin — the inhabitants of Spoleto refused the Florentines permission to bear away his holy body for burial in his native city. They buried him in their cathedral, which he had so elaborately adorned. His pupils, especially Fra Diamante, finished his paintings, and Lorenzo de' Medici paid for the erection of the tomb of this genius, who had in him — with something of the vagabond — much of the saint.

The most important Florentine painters after Filippo Lippi and before the rise of Botticelli and his followers, were Benozzo Gozzoli, Francesco Pesellino, Alesso Baldovinetti, the Pollaiuoli, Andrea Verrocchio, and Cosimo Rosselli. Of Pesellino we shall make but the briefest mention, and with the work of Rosselli we do not deem it necessary to deal.

The first-named Benozzo di Lese di Sandro, surnamed, GOZZOLI (1420-1497), "the thick-throated," the son of a poor Florentine waistcoat-maker, was born in Florence. The pupil of Fra Angelico and a careful student of the works of Masaccio, he assisted his Dominican master in his last work at Rome and at Orvieto; and Fra Angelico's influence can be traced in much of his best work. Gozzoli has three special claims to our attention. First, he vies with Ghirlandaio as one of the ablest pictorial chroniclers of his epoch. For example, in his frescoes in the chapel of the Medici stronghold in Florence, afterwards known as the Riccardi Palace, he bequeathed to posterity a cavalcade of crowned and sumptuously robed princelings, on richly caparisoned steeds, with their courtiers, squires, pages, and servitors, that vividly depicts the luxurious life of the age. In the church of S. Agostino, in San Gimignano, he relates the life of that great Doctor of the Church in a series of frescoes in which his love of children, his love of landscape, and his taste for architecture are displayed. Second, he was a painter of much extraordinary ability and of such marvellous rapidity that he executed a greater number of frescoes than any of his contemporaries. But there is still

a third, and much more important reason that should urge us assiduously to examine his work. It is the fact that his paintings in Montefalco and Perugia so deeply influenced the Umbrian masters who studied his works that they were the means of giving a new trend of poetic naturalism and a new virility to Umbrian painting.

A gentle soul, this amiable Florentine, who, although he lacked the religious fervour of Fra Angelico, the artistry of Fra Filippo Lippi, and the scientific knowledge of Paolo Uccello, was intensely sincere in his desire to excel himself in every new work to which he set his hand. "I am working with all my might," he wrote from Florence to Piero de' Medici at his country villa, "and if I fail it will be from lack of knowledge, not from want of zeal." But those who have studied the frescoes just mentioned, and his great biblical epic in the Campo Santo of Pisa, may agree that his sloven drawing, his awkward grouping, his faulty perspective, and his careless foreshortenings, are imperfections due, perhaps, more to haste and negligence than to lack of knowledge.

Other faults of Gozzoli are his excess of detail and his vastly overcrowded architectural backgrounds. He worked with Ghiberti on the second of his famous baptistery gates; and probably from Ghiberti acquired the taste for landscape, architecture, and other details and accessories, which unfortunately detract attention from the principal figures of his compositions. Sir Joshua Reynolds once remarked that buildings and landscapes were given so much space in Ghiberti's bas-reliefs that his central figures became secondary objects, and the same thing might be truthfully said of some of Gozzoli's frescoes. But with all his faults, we are forced to admit, when we examine his well-preserved work in the Riccardi Palace, that his "Procession of the Magi in Quest of the New Born King" is one of the outstanding frescoes of the Renaissance. Indeed, some of the most distinguished and dignified figures we have ever seen are to be found in these frescoes, especially the figures of the youthful king on the white horse and his attendants. His landscape of mountains and plains, where cypresses and pines tower skywards, and roses and pomegranates hang in clusters, is a fitting background for the choirs of adoring angels, so chaste and reverent in attitude and bearing that they might have been drawn by the hand of Gozzoli's master, Fra Angelico, himself.

Francesco de Pesello, generally known as PESELLINO, to distinguish him from his grandfather, Giuliano, was one of the most attractive artists of the fifteenth century. Both the Peselli were renowned as animal painters, and there are records of a great hunting scene and a wonderful group of caged

lions, which Pesellino painted for the Medici palace, but these have disappeared. A few of his works are still extant and may be seen in the Accademia in Florence, in the Doria Gallery in Rome, in Bergamo, and Milan. The Louvre has his "Miracle of SS. Cosmos and Damian" and the National Gallery, his "Trinity." Born in 1422, Pesellino studied the art of Fra Angelico, Masaccio, and Domenico Veneziano, and followed closely in the foot-paths of Fra Filippo Lippi. The earliest of his works now in existence is a predella on the legend of S. Nicholas, but the finest work at hand is his illustration of Boccaccio's story, "The Marriage of Griselda," now in the Morelli Gallery at Bergamo.

ALESSO BALDOVINETTI (1427-1499) is said by Baldinucci to have been a pupil of Uccello, and by other historians to have studied under Domenico Veneziano. He was an experimentalist in oil medium, and was regarded as the ablest mosaicist of his age. He is credited with being the master of the Pollaiuoli, Verrocchio, and Ghirlandaio. Alesso was indeed a versatile artist, for he painted frescoes, altar-pieces, bedstead panels, marriage chests, and other furniture. He designed cartoons for stained glass, and was an expert craftsman in mosaic. Vasari tells us "he loved painting landscapes as they are, and you see in his pictures rivers, bridges, rocks, plants, fruit-trees, roads, fields, towns, castles, and an infinite number of similar objects. In his 'Nativity' you can count the separate straws and knots in the thatched roof of the hut, and you see the shelves in the ruined house behind, worn away by rain. The thick root of ivy growing up the wall is painted with so much accuracy that the green leaves are differently shaded on either side; and among the shepherds he introduced a snake crawling in the most natural manner along the wall."

Of the very rare authenticated works of this master, two are in the Uffizi, his "Madonna and Child with Saints," and "The Annunciation." The first of these is remarkable for its clearness of linear design and minuteness of elaboration, but the figures of SS. Cosmas, Damian, and John the Baptist on the left, SS. Anthony the Abbot, Lawrence, and Julian on the right, are stiff and angular, and the draperies are hard and heavy. Judged by this one picture alone, Baldovinetti is not of the first rank and is not to be compared with his fellow student, Piero della Francesca.

Baldovinetti followed, or attempted to follow, his master's, Domenico Veneziano, new methods of colouring, and his experiments often proved disastrous. He began his works in fresco and finished them in secco, mixing his egg-tempera with a liquid varnish, heated in the fire, which instead of protecting his paintings from damp destroyed the colour. And so, wrote

Vasari, "instead of making himself a rare and valuable discovery, he deceived himself and ruined his works." His greatest work, to which he gave the best years of his life, the frescoes in the choir of the Trinita, which Rosselli, Gozzoli, Perugino, and Filippino Lippi—on being commissioned to fix the price to be paid for them—valued at one thousand florins, were destroyed when the choir of the church was rebuilt in 1760.

The style of the POLLAIUOLI brothers, ANTONIO (1431-1498) and PIERO (1433-1496), is mannered and exaggerated, and it is difficult to assign to each that which belongs to him in the pictures usually ascribed to one or the other. Antonio was not only a painter but a sculptor, engraver, and goldsmith, and was hailed by Cellini as the best draughtsman of his day in Florence. "He was so great as draughtsman that not only all the goldsmiths worked from his designs," Cellini tells us, "but that many of the best sculptors and painters were glad to make use of them, and by this means attained the highest honour. This man did little else, but he drew marvellously, and always practised the same grand style of drawing."

Of Antonio, Vasari tells us: "He not only dissected many human bodies to study their anatomy, but was the first to investigate the action of the muscles and afterwards give them their due place and order in his drawings of the human frame." His marvellous anatomical knowledge is well displayed in his "Hercules and the Hydra" and "Hercules and Antaeus" panels, now in the Uffizi, for every movement, every muscle of the two bodies closed in deadly combat is the inevitable consequence of the chief motif of effort. The contortion of Hercules' face, the deadly grip of his arms round his opponent's waist, and the pressure of his feet upon the ground are all absolutely logical, correct, reflex actions. Another, and the best preserved of all Antonio's works, is his famous "Martyrdom of S. Sebastian," which he painted for the Pucci Chapel of the Servite church of S. Sebastian in Florence. It is one of the treasures of the National Gallery, London. This picture has no beauty of line; its grouping is erratic, childish, and faulty for all Antonio's attempts at pyramidal composition. The wide Tuscan landscape that forms a background, with its welter of buildings, hills, figures, horses, and what not, all tend to detract from the central figure, but as a masterpiece of vigorous action and life-like movement it remains, for the age in which it was painted, unrivalled. Perhaps, Perate goes too far when he says that Antonio Pollaiuolo was "the first of these great pagan artists of the Italian Renaissance for whom the human form, living or dead, and the study of anatomy and the nude became the sole aim and irresistible passion." But it must be admitted that his "Martyrdom" is not a picture to

inspire devotion. We become too much interested in the actions of the archers who are executing S. Sebastian, particularly in the one who is resting his bow against his breast and employing all the force of his sinewy arms and legs to prepare it for action. We watch his muscles straining and the veins of his neck swelling so intently that we come to ignore that which should be the essence of the picture: the martyrdom of a saint.

The famous Mercanzia "Virtues," the six upright panels now in the Hall of Botticelli and the Hall of Leonardo in the Uffizi, have been ascribed by some critics to Antonio and to Piero; and by other critics they are regarded as the joint work of both artists. Four of the panels are so thickly painted over, that nothing is now to be seen of the original work of these talented brothers. The best preserved of the panels is the "Prudence," and traces of the original work may be seen in the "Charity." To Piero is now generally assigned the well-known "Portrait of Galeazzo Sforza," "SS. Eustace, James, and Vincent," now in the Uffizi; the angels in the Portogallo in S. Miniato; and "The Coronation of the Virgin" now in the choir of San Gimignano. The few paintings and drawings we possess to-day which can be definitely said to be Antonio's, prove the truth of the statements of both Cellini and Vasari, for in his anatomical researches he was the precursor of Leonardo da Vinci, and in drawings of the nude he influenced both Botticelli and Signorelli, and can be hailed as the precursor of Michelangelo.

Of the seven pre-Botticellian painters selected for brief mention here, the most interesting, if not the most gifted is, probably, Andrea di Cione, surnamed VERROCCHIO (1435-1488), from his first master, Giuliano Verrocchio, the Florentine goldsmith. He was born in Florence, and has many claims to our attention both as a man and an artist. First of all, he was undoubtedly a great sculptor, if not a great painter, for Lauducci regarded the head of his figure of Christ in the Or' San Michele group, as the most beautiful ever carved by man. Second, he was the first, or one of the first, to take plaster casts of living personages from which he afterwards made busts. Third, he is the only Italian Renaissance artist of first rank to be tried for murder; and, lastly, he was the tutor of three renowned painters: Perugino, Lorenzo di Credi, and Leonardo da Vinci.

Many of Verrocchio's characteristics and many of the events of his life are similar to those of his illustrious pupil, da Vinci. Was Andrea's the stronger of the two personalities, and did he indelibly impress his own characteristics on the painter of "The Last Supper"? Let us compare them for a moment or two. There are in Italy, Germany, Austria, and England, only some seven or eight paintings now assigned to Verrocchio, and of these there is

but one that can with any certainty be definitely claimed as his own work, his famous "Baptism of Christ in the Jordan." This proves that as a painter his output was meagre, and in this he resembles Leonardo, as we shall see when we come to make mention of the latter's achievements. Verrocchio was a goldsmith and a sculptor in the first place, and only painted pictures occasionally when he had, as it were, nothing better to do; Leonardo's attitude towards painting was exactly the same. Verrocchio was an indefatigable worker, he was never idle: he worked at surveying, sculpture, at painting, or designing, passing from one thing to another, in order not to get tired by working too long at the same subject; in all this Leonardo was his counterpart. Verrocchio painted profile portraits of famous Florentine beauties, distinguished by a beautiful style and arrangement of the hair; so did Leonardo. Verrocchio studied mathematics, geometry, and was an accomplished musician; his pupil followed him in all those pursuits. Verrocchio never married; neither did Leonardo. He was commissioned to execute a great equestrian statue of Colleoni by the Venetian Senate, but never lived to see it cast in bronze. Even in this there is a similarity in the lives of master and pupil, for the model of Leonardo's great Sforza monument was shot to pieces by the Gascon archers when the French took Milan.

Verrocchio both in style and technique is clearly akin to Pollaiuolo and Baldovinetti, but he is thoughtful and contemplative rather than dramatic. In his "Baptism," which he painted for the Vallambrosan fathers of S. Salvi, the figure of our Lord is drawn with minute anatomical accuracy, and bears a strong resemblance to his bronze statue in Or' San Michele, to which we have already referred. But it is not merely a picture of a statue: it is a picture of a perfect human form, and the colouring and modelling are delicate and full of feeling. Verrocchio died in Venice in 1488; and his body was brought to Florence for burial by his favourite pupil, Lorenzo di Credi, to whom by will he left the task of finishing his Colleoni statue.

CHAPTER SIX

THREE GREAT FLORENTINES

Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, and Ghirlandaio

THE Medici family, under whose rule Florence reached the zenith of her prosperity and power, was the Maecenas of this era. Their palace was "the lyceum of philosophers, the academy of painters, and the Arcadia of poets." The talents of many painters of renown, including Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, and Ghirlandaio were developed under their princely auspices. But time is usually on the side of the painter as well as the poet, and the lineaments of even the most regal lordlings of the little Italian city-states would be unknown to us to-day, were it not for the fact that the struggling artists of every epoch have repaid their patrons and protectors by giving them immortality.

The patronage of the Medici stimulated the taste not only of the citizens of Florence but of all adjacent communities, who — at a time when religious feeling was still prominent in art — vied with one another in adorning their cities, their churches, and their homes. To this spirit the Duomo of Florence was in itself a striking witness; and many other churches and convents, whose walls were decorated with paintings, rose in the city. Then, too, there was a great demand for statues and bas-reliefs to adorn the cathedral, the baptistery, the Church of Or' San Michele, and other buildings. So Donatello, Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, the Pollaiuoli, and Andrea Verrocchio were given opportunities to produce their greatest works.

But the brilliancy displayed in the court of these princelings has blinded the eyes of later historians, as it did those of contemporaries, to the fact that Christian religion and Christian art had, probably, no more fatal enemies, in Italy at any rate, than members of the house of Medici. For they gave that impulse to pagan literature, pagan philosophy, and pagan art, from whose deadly effects Christendom has never recovered. Old principles of thought were broken up; Aristotle and his school of Christian interpreters

were abandoned, and Plato, who took his place, was thought to need no Christian interpreter at all. Then much was heard of "the virtues of philosophy" and "the sublime mysteries of Platonism," and little of either the virtues or the mysteries of the Gospels. The Medici, in their attempt to secure supreme power in Tuscany, pursued this object with a total indifference to the protection of morals, and made the indulgence of the people in a certain license of manners one of the most approved methods of acquiring the dominion at which they aimed. It has ever been the policy of those who grasped dictatorship to distract the minds of their dupes from an apprehension of their real danger.

"Antiquity was patronised by the Medici only on the side of sensuality," says Carlier in his *Aesthetiques de Savonarola*,* and he continues: "Their love for pagan art was not a classic taste but a voluptuous passion. In literature Ovid, Catullus, and Tibullus were in greater favor with them than Homer, Cicero, or Caesar. Their celebrated garden at Florence became the sanctuary of a nude naturalism in art. Development of form—the mere manifestation of physical perfection, statues of divinities who presided of old over orgies of unbridled vice, these attracted the public admiration, and found a species of worship in obsequious criticism, in poetry, and even in philosophic contemplation."

Alessandro di Mariano di Vanni dei Filipepi, one of the most fascinating personalities in the whole history of Italian art, is known to us to-day only as SANDRO BOTTICELLI (1444-1510). He was born of burgher stock in Florence. Sandro is, of course, a contraction for his Christian name; Botticelli, which means "little cask," is said by some writers to have been taken out of compliment to the goldsmith to whom as a boy he was apprenticed, and by other writers to be the name that belonged to his brother, Giovanni, who is thought to have been a wine seller. But though more is known of Florentine contemporary life than of that in practically any other European city, very little is definitely known of the early life of this painter, and the mystery of his nickname has never been solved. The chronicles of Anonimo, the biographical sketch of the unreliable Vasari, some references scattered in city archives, and one allusion to him by Leonardo da Vinci are the only records we possess of one who stands out pre-eminently as the greatest pictorial chronicler of the life of his day, of one whose work reflects the strange mixture of Christian and pagan beliefs, which permeated the thought of the Florence in which he lived and died.

* *Annales Archeologiques.*

On leaving his goldsmith-master, Botticelli joined Fra Filippo Lippi at Prato, where this restless painter was then painting his frescoes of scenes from the lives of S. John the Baptist and S. Stephen in the choir of the cathedral, and, probably, from Lippi received his first lessons in painting. Fra Filippo was, as we have already pointed out, regarded as the greatest colourist of his age, as a rapid draughtsman, as being thoroughly proficient in his art, and as one who had formed his style on that of Masaccio. But a certain coarseness of thought, a lack of spirituality of feeling, and the selection of rough, and sometimes uncouth, types for his models mar many of his paintings, which would be otherwise full of grace. One of Botticelli's early works, the "Adoration" tondo in the National Gallery, London, formerly ascribed to his master, shows how closely he adhered to Fra Filippo's types and method. In one of his most famous paintings, "The Madonna of the Magnificat," the yellow-robed angel who holds the Blessed Virgin's prayer book bears more than a faint resemblance to the coarse-featured red-winged angel of Lippi's "Madonna and Child with Two Angels." Nothing is known of the exact length of time Sandro remained under the tutorship of Fra Filippo, but he returned to Florence and came under the influence of the Pollaiuoli and Andrea Verrocchio. These left the imprint of their genius not only on him but on the majority of the Florentine artists of their time. By 1470 he was already a painter of established reputation, being then only in his twenty-seventh year. However much he owed to his first master, he was succeeding in forming a distinctive style of his own. An attentive student—and, in his last years, an illustrator—of Dante, a reader of Boccaccio, a student of classical mythology, of an impressionable temperament, and always of a serious turn of mind which made him an admirer and adherent of Savonarola, a good Catholic, but impregnated with ideas begotten of the new learning, Botticelli, for a time, became one of the Florentine artists who were as ready to paint a god of Olympus or a naked Venus as they were to paint a crucified Christ or an enthroned Madonna.

But those who would criticise Botticelli for the sensuality of his classical subjects, should make haste to remember that Italy was, by natural descent, the land least Gothic-minded, and the land most in touch with the ancient learning. In his day, kings and princelings and other great ones of the earth vied with one another for the most complete collection of antiquities; Latin and Greek were considered the only languages worth learning; the love stories of the gods and goddesses of classical mythology became so popular that even Raphael painted one for Agostino Chigi, the banker, in S. Maria del Popolo in Rome; the classical influence permeated every art: literature,

sculpture, and architecture, as well as painting. The eyes of the Italians were turned backwards. Their all-absorbing desire was to write, to paint, to carve, to build, and to model their lives, as closely as possible, on the lives of the great Greeks and Romans.

Born and reared in Florence, the pulsating centre of half-Christian, half-pagan tendencies, and ever vacillating between a love of the free sensuous life of the Greeks and the stern asceticism of mediaeval Christianity, is it to be wondered at that Botticelli was the product of his age and environment, or that he painted "The Birth of Venus," an artistically modelled nude and acclaimed his masterpiece of decorative art with the same intensity of purpose that he painted his "Madonna of the Magnificat," one of the most beautiful attainments in the whole range of Renaissance art, in which the technique of circular design is carried to its ultimate triumph and perfection? In his works, which are never free from the quaint mannerism which gives them a peculiar charm, there is reflected a touch of the dramatic art of Masaccio and a feeling as human as that found in those of Fra Filippo. Some of them display the spirituality of Fra Angelico. One and all, even the earliest, show the energy of line of the careful goldsmith; and they reflect, as do those of few other Florentine painters, the thoughts, ideals, and aspirations of the age of Lorenzo de' Medici.

One age lauds and worships this extraordinary master, another age desecrates and abhors him. In his own day his renown stood so high that his name alone of all contemporary painters is mentioned by Leonardo da Vinci in his treatise on painting. But his popularity did not long survive his death. When it became the fashion in the early decades of the sixteenth century for artists to ape the grand manner of Michelangelo, the very name of Botticelli seemed to have sunk into oblivion, and not till Ruskin and Pater and after them Morelli and Berenson hailed him as "a creative and original genius of the first rank," and as "the greatest lineal designer that Europe has ever had," did Botticelli regain his position in the estimation of the art lovers of our own age.

Botticelli's works may be divided roughly into four great groups: his Madonnas, his biblical subjects, his portraits, and his miscellaneous paintings; but he won fame, above all, as a painter of the Blessed Virgin. Gentle melancholy and infinite tenderness are the key-notes of two of his famed lyrical conceptions, "The Madonna of the Magnificat" and "The Madonna of the Pomegranate," in which an almost sad haunting wistfulness is depicted on the faces of the Blessed Virgin and her divine Son. In the first named, painted before Botticelli's departure for Rome, when he was called

by Pope Sixtus IV in 1481 to paint some of the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, the Blessed Virgin is depicted supporting her Child with her left hand, while with her right she is dipping a quill pen into an inkpot held by a half-grown boy angel. A second angel is holding up an open book at which a third angel gazes intently, while yet two more angels with outstretched arms raise aloft a jewelled crown above the Madonna's gold-enhaloed head. This tondo, or circular composition, is a veritable masterpiece of linear rhythm, and has been beautifully likened by Symonds to the "corolla of an open rose," implying the soft folding of one line of beauty upon another. Its colouring is soft and harmonious, and the peace of the distant landscape, seen between the heads of the Madonna and the angels, and the grace and sympathetic feeling of the whole composition give it a greater hold on the mind than the masterpieces of later painters, who surpassed its author in technical knowledge and feeling for beauty.

Botticelli's three great Roman frescoes: "Moses's Miracles in Egypt," "The Fall of Korah," and "The Temptation of our Saviour," are still extant, and are regarded by many critics as his best paintings. Although prone to overcrowd his works with figures, some of the individual groups in the third of the Sistine frescoes, just named, are equal to any work he produced either before or afterwards. The two paintings which refer to Moses are remarkable for the success he attained in rendering with great power the numerous, if badly balanced, figures in varied and dramatic action, and the natural flutter of the draperies in the breeze.

Botticelli at his best was unique and without a peer or an equal in suggesting movement, witness the draperies of the angel Gabriel in his disputed "Annunciation," painted for the monks of Castello. In this picture the Blessed Virgin is theatrically posed, her gestures are affected, and the whole composition might be termed unhappy and unworthy of Botticelli, were it not for the great artistry he displays in painting the movement of Gabriel's pinions, and the billowing flutter of his garments, which have not had time to settle into place after his flight from heaven to earth.

Many of the greatest painters of the latter part of the fifteenth century were induced to leave their native towns and cities. Perugino went on his travels through Italy; Leonardo da Vinci spent the best years of his life in Milan; Michelangelo did his greatest work in Rome; but Botticelli spent almost the whole of his life in Florence. And Florence has treasured the best works of her gifted son so zealously, that it is only there that he can be studied to advantage. Only there, in the Accademia, the Uffizi, and the Pitti galleries, are to be found his greatest works; for, even after ignoring pictures



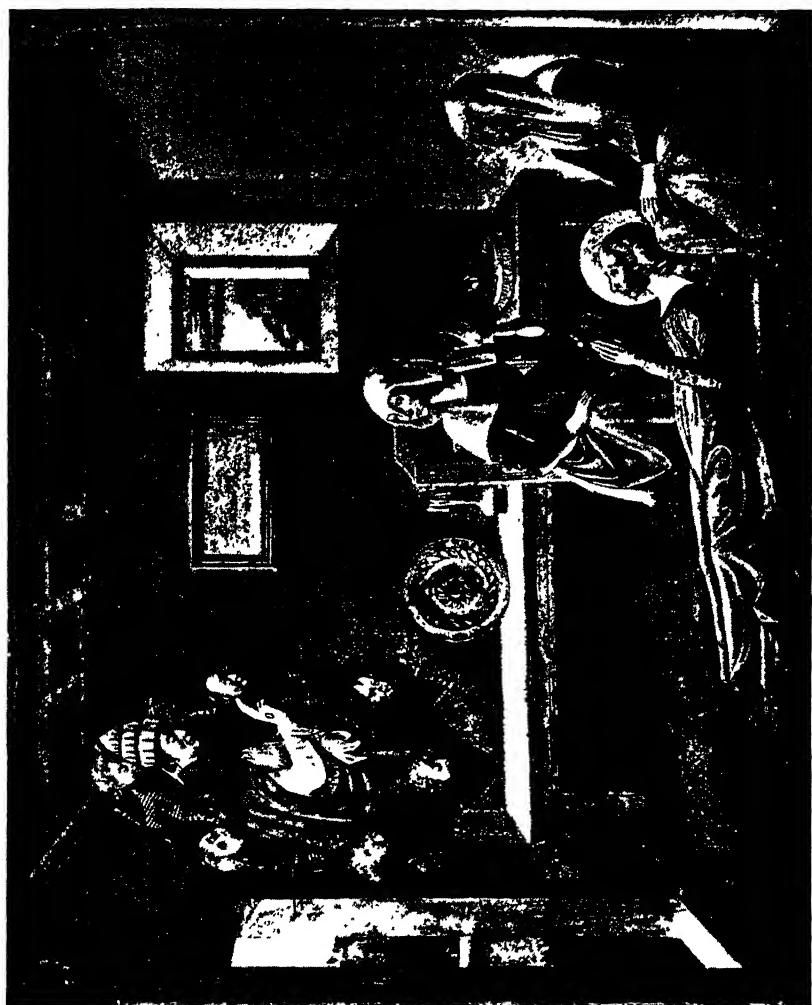
MADONNA OF THE MAGNIFICAT

Sandro Botticelli



VISION OF S. BERNARD (Detail)

Filippino Lippi



Domenico Ghirlandaio

DEATH OF S. FINA



THE VIRGIN

Neroccio di Landi

of doubtful origin but still ascribed to him, in the Uffizi alone, in the "Hall of Botticelli," will be found works in which every mood of his mind and every phase of his art is illustrated.

Botticelli's attitude towards art and life itself was greatly changed — as were the attitudes of Fra Bartolommeo and other Florentine painters, and his last two pictures, "The Calumny," painted for his friend, Antonio Segni, and his "Nativity," now in the National Gallery, London, were profoundly influenced by the persecution and the execution of Savonarola. History has vindicated Savonarola, even as it has vindicated another martyr, S. Joan of Arc. He gave much more than he took away, and he promised rest, peace, and happiness for mortification, penance, and reform. The subject of "The Calumny" is taken from Lucian's account of the picture by Apelles, which Alberti quoted in his *Treatise on Painting*, but the bloody strife of warring factions in Florence and the stark tragedy of saintly Savonarola's unmerited end moved Botticelli to paint this terrible allegory of the violence and injustice of man. Botticelli died in Florence and was buried there, in his father's vault in the Church of the Ognissanti, on May 17, 1510.

The registry of FILIPPINO DI FILIPPO LIPPI (1457-1504), in the Guild of Painters in Florence is illegible, and apart from facts about the commissions he received for some of his paintings and the dates on his works, we have but scanty records of the life of this famous pupil of Botticelli. The story of his being a natural son of Fra Filippo Lippi and the nun, Lucretia Buti, has been dismissed by Franz Kugler and other serious scholars of repute. Unhappily it is still being dished up by the type of writer who gloatingly avails himself of the opportunity of rehearsing any unsavoury episode in which a priest is involved, and the type of writer who foolishly imagines that to be born out of wedlock, instead of being an unfortunate occurrence, is an interesting and a "romantic" incident. That he was a favourite pupil, an adopted son, or a relative of Fra Filippo's — perchance the son of Spinetta Buti, Lucretia's sister — is probable. That he took the name of the one who most likely gave him his first lessons in drawing at Spoleto between 1467 and 1469, is also quite probable, and would not in those days have been considered unusual. To give but two examples: it is generally conceded that Alessandro di Mariano de Filipepi took the name of his master Botticelli; and that Andrea, the son of Michele di Cioni, took the name of Verrocchio from Giuliano Verrocchio, the goldsmith to whom he was apprenticed. We are not sure even of the date of Filippino Lippi's birth, some authorities give it as having taken place in 1460 or 1461; others in 1458. An engraved inscription on the house in Prato where he was born gives his birth-date as 1457.

His teachers were Fra Diamante and Sandro Botticelli, who were pupils of the Carmelite monk. Diamante himself was so thoroughly imbued with his master's manner, that his teaching is responsible for the indelible stamp of Fra Filippo which appears in many of Filippino's works. It was Diamante who took Filippino from Spoleto and placed him in Botticelli's studio in Florence. Here he made such rapid progress that he won fame with his "Vision of S. Bernard," one of the most entrancing of all Florentine altarpieces, which he painted, according to the general consensus of opinion, in his twentieth year. This masterpiece—which is said to have influenced Leonardo da Vinci's "The Virgin of the Rocks"—is now preserved in the Badia, which shares with the Baptistery of S. Miniato, the distinction of being the only Florentine churches mentioned by Dante.

"The 'Vision of S. Bernard' represents the most perfect expression of Filippino's genius, and is vigorous in design and full of the most interesting detail, figures, buildings, rocks, trees, and flowers, all finished with the greatest care and delicacy." S. Bernard, who was to Dante

"He who drew light from Mary,
As the morning star from the sun,"

has been writing in the open air, he sits at his desk awed at the sudden apparition of the Blessed Virgin, on whose face there is an expression of calm, serene sweetness, and benign tenderness. The saint's rapt gaze, the surprise depicted in his raised hands, the reverence of the boy-angels who attend our Lady, the natural attitudes of the figures in the background—who, of course, do not know that an apparition is taking place—make this picture one of Italy's superb contributions to art and one of the most remarkable that ever came from the hands of a painter barely out of his teens.

Some few years later, when he was only twenty-five years of age, Filippino was engaged to paint a fresco in one of the halls of the Palazzo Pubblico, at the same terms that had been offered to the great Umbrian master, Perugino, which was, indeed, a great compliment to so young an artist. These works having won him a measure of fame, and the best fresco-painters—Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, and Rosselli—being absent in Rome, Filippo was chosen by the Carmelites to complete the already famous frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel, in the Carmine in Florence, which had been left unfinished by Masaccio. He began this work by completing Masaccio's unfinished work "The Raising of the King's Son." In this, and in other studies, he left to posterity a gallery of portraits of some of the famous men of his day, among whom Vasari has identified for us Piero della Pugliese, one of Filippino's

patrons; Luigi Pulci, the poet; Piero Guicciardini, the father of the historian; and Marco Soderini. These, however, have been regarded by some critics as unnecessary groups of onlookers, which spoil the composition's proportion and destroy its sense of concentrated force. On the opposite wall, in his two-subject fresco, "SS. Peter and Paul before Nero" and "The Crucifixion of S. Peter," other well-known Florentines are to be seen, notably his own master, Botticelli; the goldsmith-painter, Antonio Pollaiuolo; Francesco Granacci; and Filippino himself.

Great progress had been made in painting since Masaccio's day. Problems of perspective and of light and shade, which confronted this master, now no longer puzzled the average apprentice. Nevertheless, Filippino's compositions fail to reach the majesty and dignity of the works of the earlier and greater man, who made the Brancacci Chapel a place of pilgrimage for artists of every nationality. Masaccio cared not a great deal for charm of colour; for painting vistas of lakes, mountains, and gorgeous equipages; or for bedecking the garments of those he represented in his frescoes—all which we find in the works of the Umbrian, Gentile da Fabriano, and, to a lesser degree, in the works of Fra Filippo Lippi—rather did Masaccio concern himself, like his great successor Michelangelo, with everything that tended to express the sublime aspect of things.

Filippino Lippi, it has been remarked, and not unwisely, achieved a compromise between the art of Fra Angelico and that of Masaccio, and may be regarded as the last direct inheritor of the great traditions of the master, whose frescoes he was called upon to complete. Imbued with Fra Filippo Lippi's manner, Filippino was fortunately free from many of the defects which spoil the work of the earlier artist. He is never coarse or vulgar in his treatment of sacred subjects; he proved himself capable of grasping it, if not equalling, the serious dignity of Masaccio's style; and, if he emaciated his figures to obtain more expressiveness and lost some of his balance of composition, it is most unfair to say of him that his composition is always illogical and confused. "It is marvellous to see the strange fancies he has expressed in his painting," Vasari wrote of him, "he was always introducing vases, footgear, temple-ornaments, head-dresses, strange trappings, armour, trophies, scimitars, swords, togas, cloaks, and an array of things so various and so beautiful that we owe him to-day a great and eternal obligation for all the beauty and ornamentation that he thus added to our art."

During the next few years, the young painter executed several of his finest works, notably, in 1485, an enthroned Madonna crowned by angels and attended by the patrons of Florence, and a companion for this altar-piece,

which was destined for the Chapel of S. Bernard, in the Palazzo Pubblico. To this period of his career, we may ascribe the Madonna in S. Spirito, with the fine portraits of the donor, Tanai de Nerli and his wife, who are presented to the Blessed Virgin by S. Martin and S. Catherine. To this period also belongs his "Madonna Adoring the Divine Child," now in the Uffizi. This much injured and restored picture, which almost rivals his "Vision of S. Bernard" as regards tenderness of sentiment and beauty of the forms, is free from many of Filippino's later mannerisms. In it the Blessed Virgin is seen, in a red tunic and a blue mantle, kneeling in prayer, her loving gaze fixed upon the divine Babe, who lies upon the flowered sward of an enclosed garden, with His little hands crossed upon His breast.

By this time Filippino's fame had reached the ears of the art-loving Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, who sent him an invitation to his court. This invitation Filippino did not accept, although he painted two panels for the king. But having been recommended by Lorenzo de' Medici to Cardinal Caraffa, who required the services of a painter to decorate a chapel in S. Maria sopra Minerva, in Rome, Filippino set out for that city in 1489.

S. Maria sopra Minerva is a unique church in a city famed for its churches. It is the only Gothic—or what passes for Gothic—church the Eternal City can boast. The building, as we know it to-day, dates from the end of the thirteenth century, when the two Dominican builders who had planned and erected S. Maria Novella in Florence came to Rome at the bidding of Pope Nicholas III, and built an almost exact replica of their Florentine church. Erected by Florentines, decorated by Florentines, and patronised almost exclusively by Florentines, it is not surprising that Cardinal Caraffa should have sought the services of a Florentine artist to adorn the chapel dedicated to S. Thomas Aquinas. Writing from Rome, while engaged on his work in S. Maria sopra Minerva, to Filippo Strozzi, the builder of the famous Strozzi Palace in Florence, Filippino apologises for his delay in executing some work for this important Florentine in his family chapel in S. Maria Novella, and he continues: "I have found a really good patron here who shows me such kindness and keeps me in such affluence that I would not change places with any man. My work pleases him and he is willing to pay me for it without a thought of mean dealings. At present the marble altar is being made, the work of which will cost two hundred and fifty gold florins. The chapel could not be finer or richer in colouring. The pavement is of porphyry and serpentine in the most decorative design, and a rich marble balustrade divides the chapel from the church. . . ." Even as Filippo described it we can see the chapel to-day, not in its pristine freshness as he beheld it, but still

an excellent example of Renaissance workmanship. And here Filippino Lippi painted, among other frescoes, his "Triumph of S. Thomas," that favourite theme of the Dominican Order, which Giottesque masters had represented one hundred and forty years before in the chapter-house of S. Maria Novella. Unfortunately a portion of the work, in which the victory of the theological virtues are set forth, has been destroyed by the erection of a not-graceful monument to Pope Paul IV. This fresco is not beyond criticism, but with all its faults it has claims to be regarded as the most important attempt at allegorical painting in the grand manner before the renowned "Disputa" of Raphael.

Filippino's "Adoration of the Magi," which he painted in 1496, apart from its value as a work of art, has a curious historical significance. The Magi and their attendants are the members of the younger branch of the Medici, who have returned to Florence now that Piero has been expelled, and they are waiting their chance. They have already replaced the family of the elder Cosmo de' Medici, who occupy the same position in a similar picture painted some eighteen years before by Filippino's master, Botticelli. The old astronomer kneeling to the extreme left is the elder Piero Francesco; the most prominent figure in the picture, from whose head a page is lifting a crown, is Piero Francesco's son; and the precious vessel he is to offer to the divine Infant is handed to him by the younger Piero Francesco. There are some thirty figures in this "Adoration," and while they are noble, life-like, and full of vigour, the tendency to overload them with ornament is apparent. The impression made upon us, when we first saw this picture, was that it was not so much a painting of the Nativity as a pageant of the Nativity. The commission to paint it was given to Leonardo da Vinci in 1480 by the monks of S. Donato at Scopeto, but Leonardo as usual, made very slow progress and failed to fulfil his contract, so that the commission was transferred to Filippino.

Quite late in his career Filippino painted, for the heirs of the Filippo Strozzi to whom he wrote from Rome, the frescoes in the Strozzi chapel. Nowhere is the artist's extraordinary power of representing emotion more clearly shown than here. What however is regarded by many critics as the best of Lippi's works extant is his "Madonna with S. Jerome and S. Dominic," now in the National Gallery, London. It is original in its opposition of broad dark masses to pale golden tones and tender contours. If this picture is critically compared with some of those of Fra Filippo Lippi and Botticelli, it will become evident that Filippino easily excels these masters in delicacy of type and refinement of treatment.

The work of this great painter is so varied in character that any attempt at a quick summing-up of its chief features would be impossible in the present volume. His selection to finish Masaccio's Brancacci Chapel frescoes proves the eminence he had reached in his art; his "Vision of S. Bernard" alone places him in the first rank of Renaissance artists; while the finest example of his work as a colourist is his National Gallery "Madonna and Child," just mentioned. His faults were the faults of the age in which he lived, but he never deteriorated, his career was one of continual progress, and his fine qualities fit him to rank with the greatest of his contemporaries. Filippino Lippi died suddenly, on April 18, 1504; and he was universally mourned not only on account of the passing of one endowed with rare talents, but of one who had led a blameless life.

Domenico di Tommaso Curradi di Doffo Bigordi, known to us to-day as GHIRLANDAIO (1449-1494), "the garland-maker," received this title because of his skill in fashioning the coronets, the tiaras or garlands, fashionable with the ladies of Florence of his time. With Botticelli and Filippino Lippi, he formed a trio which truly represented the age of Lorenzo de' Medici, and was one of the greatest of a group of Florentine masters who, owing to their early training in the establishments of goldsmiths and bronze workers, and the peculiarities of style they developed from such training, have become known as "The Goldsmith-Painters." Their treatment of a nude or draped figure, their love of ornament, and their clearness and conciseness of line suggests hands used to the delicate and detailed modelling of the goldsmith.

Ghirlandaio, we are told, was apprenticed by his father to a goldsmith, but spent his time drawing portraits of his master's customers and of the men and women he saw on the streets. Eventually he was apprenticed to Alesso Baldovinetti, painter, antiquary, and collector. Although the precision of his drawings, the finish of his paintings, the carvings of the pilasters, and the elaborate ornamentation of the friezes of the architecture in his pictures are due to his early training, his realistic portraiture and genre-like representation of contemporary life entitle him to rank among the first fresco painters of the age. He had exhaustively studied the works of Masaccio in the Carmine; was acquainted with Hugo van der Goes's Portinari altar-piece; had been the pupil of a painter who, on account of his realism and his taste for analysis, is regarded as the forerunner of Leonardo da Vinci; and was influenced by both Botticelli and Verrocchio. It is not then to be wondered at that his earliest works exhibit little real individuality.

Ruskin was no lover of Ghirlandaio, or of what he terms his "pompous" style of painting. But we of this age believe the adjective "pompous" should

be applied to the critic's style of writing and not to the artist's style of painting, because, on comparing Ghirlandaio with his predecessors and contemporaries, we can now see that his style was that of one who was, at one and the same time, a strange mixture of mystic, idealist, and realist. He was of a happy and amiable disposition; and, according to all accounts, industrious, painstaking, and always ready for work. He considered no commission too unimportant to accept, was fired with indomitable energy, loved his art, and was never happy save when at work. "Would I had all the walls of Florence to paint!" he is said to have exclaimed not long before his death.

In his mastery of the technical methods of fresco painting, Ghirlandaio had few equals; he was acknowledged to be the best colourist in fresco of his day; and his singular gift as a portrait painter even Ruskin does not attempt to deny. Yet it is not these, but two other prominent characteristics in his paintings, which have won him lasting fame: his power of composition and his art in grouping figures. Uccello and the Pollaiuoli had, as it were, striven to compromise between decoration and realism by separating their pictures into two parts, or two planes, the foreground and the background. Ghirlandaio turned design into composition by combining both foreground and background into a single design. No artist before him had placed figures in near and distant settings, and succeeded so admirably in suggesting the intervening space. Not one of his predecessors surpassed him in the grouping of his figures, in dignified stateliness of design, in eschewing all vagueness and indefinite effects, or in getting into their frescoes such a definite, precise, sculpturesque pictorial kind of art. No two painters could be more dissimilar in their portrait work than Ghirlandaio and Botticelli. Whether Botticelli painted Greek goddesses or Madonnas and saints, it is always the intensely personal type, the same sad and wistful expression that meets the eye and invites our sympathy, but in the frescoes of Ghirlandaio, which literally teem with portraits, no two are alike in feeling or expression.

The output of Ghirlandaio, like that of Raphael and Michelangelo, was enormous and yet covers a space of little more than fifteen years, for he died in his forty-fifth year, in 1491. Among his first works of importance are those in the Vespucci chapel of the Church of the Ognissanti. The church, as it stands to-day, dates from the second half of the sixteenth century, but contains some excellent pictures belonging to the older edifice. Here, over one of the altars, may still be seen his frescoed *Pieta*, with above it the Madonna taking the Vespucci family under her protection. After being whitewashed over in 1616, this long-lost picture, painted perhaps in 1472 or 1473, was

rediscovered in 1898. Among other family portraits, it contains one of a young man said by some to be the famous navigator, Amerigo Vespucci, destined to give his name to the new continent of America.

Ghirlandaio visited Rome for the first time in 1475, and decorated a chapel in S. Maria sopra Minerva, for the Tornabnoni family, but the paintings have long since perished. His first still-extant, characteristic works are the frescoes of the Chapel of S. Fina, in the Collegiate church at San Gimignano. These were followed by his frescoes of S. Jerome at the Church of Ognisanti; and his "Last Supper," one of the most idealistic of all his works, in the refectory of the same convent.

The series of his great works began with his second visit to Rome, for never was there so grand a field for fresco-painters as when Pope Sixtus IV, having erected in 1474 the chapel which bears his name, was desirous of having it decorated. Sixtus sent to Florence for its masters, and Sandro Botticelli, Cosimo Rosselli, Luca Signorelli, and Domenico Ghirlandaio responded to his call. Botticelli was made responsible for the whole scheme of decoration, which was to represent the life of Moses on one side of the chapel, and the life of Christ on the other. It was the pope's intention to place in contrast the Old Law and the New Law, the Hebrew and the Christian dispensations, types, and prophecies with their fulfilment. Ghirlandaio painted in the Sistine Chapel from October 27, 1481, to March 15, 1482, and in these six months he produced six portraits of Pontiffs and two frescoes, "The Resurrection," which has been ruined by being painted so much that it can no longer be regarded as his work, and "The Call of the Apostles," which both for design and execution is one of the noblest frescoes of the whole series.

Ghirlandaio returned to Florence in the summer of 1482, and devoted the remainder of his life to three great undertakings: his "Maesta di San Zenobia," in the Palazzo della Signoria; his six frescoes illustrative of the "Life of S. Francis" (in which his great powers as a fresco painter displayed themselves in the most unmistakable manner) in the Sassetti Chapel in the Trinita; and his greatest work, his fifteen frescoes of the "Life of S. John the Baptist" and the "Life of the Blessed Virgin," which adorn the Tornabnoni Chapel in S. Maria Novella. In "The Preaching of S. John the Baptist," his power of composition and figure-grouping are so well exemplified, that one wonders how Ruskin was rash enough to risk his own reputation by slightly referring to Ghirlandaio as "a mere goldsmith with a gift of portraiture."

Vasari tells us that "of all the methods of painting, the fresco upon the

wall is the most masterly and the most beautiful." In one of his *Discourses*, Sir Joshua Reynolds chooses fresco painting as the illustration of that "great style" which he would have the ambition of every art student, for in it, Sir Joshua says, consists "the intellectual dignity that ennobles the painter's art." Ghirlandaio would, apparently, have been in agreement with both the architect-biographer and the first President of the Royal Academy, for he seemed to put forth every ounce of his energy into these last undertakings, which are still numbered among the greatest of Italian masterpieces.

Ghirlandaio's "Madonna and Child with Angels and Saints," now in the Uffizi, is a splendid illustration of the love of detail, which distinguishes the art of these goldsmith painters of Florence. In this deteriorated tempera on wood, the intricately patterned carpet, the jewelled mitres and copes of the kneeling bishops, the richly ornamented surcoats below S. Michael's armour, the richly studded architectural screen with its canopied niche in the background, are all delicately drawn and coloured with the minute precision of the painter's early manner. It is difficult to believe that this picture and his "Portrait of an Old Man and his Grandchild," which belongs to the last period of the artist's activity, now in the Louvre — of which we have already made mention in the second chapter of this book, when referring to ugliness in art — owe their existence to the same artist.

Ghirlandaio's skill in the technical management of fresco, his fine knowledge of the laws of linear perspective, the nobility of his conceptions, the orderly and admirable grouping of his subordinate figures, and his avoidance of the overornamentation of garments, a fault which every goldsmith painter was liable to commit, all prove him worthy of the eulogies of his contemporaries and the equally flattering opinions of the art critics of succeeding ages, who regard him as the connecting link between the great Masaccio and the still greater Raphael.

■

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LORENZETTI

The Art of the Later Sienese Painters

THE Sienese painters of the first half of the fifteenth century were, like the founders of their school, interested rather in the beauty of the soul than in the strength of the body. Therefore, they did not preoccupy themselves with scientific researches, anatomical studies, or the problems of movement. They permitted nothing to disturb the calm of their serene, mystical, conservative art, which — seldom concerning itself with portraiture or mythological subjects — developed on totally different lines to that of the Florentines, who valued knowledge for its own sake and for its assistance to their art. So it may with truth be said that the work of the majority of the Sienese painters of the early part of the century seems almost mediaeval when compared with that of their Florentine contemporaries.

The century opens with the work of Stefano di Giovanni, commonly known as Sassetta (1392-1450), who was a pupil of Paolo di Giovanni Fei. Although a charming painter, Sassetta imitated too closely the formal arrangement, painful minuteness of outlines, and the curves of the draperies, which help to distinguish the works of the early painters, Ugolino and Segna, for him to be regarded as a truly original artist. An excellent sample of his work, one of the earliest of his paintings that have been preserved, is his altar-piece, painted to the glorification of the Blessed Virgin, in the choir behind the high altar in the Collegiata, in Asciano, not far from Siena. It is a triptych showing in the centre panel the Blessed Virgin as a new-born babe in the arms of a seated tiring-woman, attended by a servant, who is drying or warming a cloth before a fire. In the Epistle-side panel, S. Anne, still abed and attended by an angel, and in the Gospel-side panel, S. Joachim, Mary's father, are depicted. Above these are three scenes: Mary as a mother with her divine Son in her lap, and two small panels of her death and burial. Unconventional, quaint, highly imaginative, call it what you will, this dainty,

delicately executed triptych is a perfect expression of the faith of a still unspoiled Italy.

Next come three painters, born at the beginning of the century, Domenico di Bartolo (active 1428-1449), Sano di Pietro (1406-1481), and Lorenzo di Pietro (1412-1480), better known as Vecchietta. Vasari errs in calling DOMENICO DI BARTOLO a nephew of Taddeo di Bartoli, although he was a pupil of the earlier painter. His manner is Umbro-Sienese, he was deficient in knowledge of perspective, some of his works lack order and balance, and he was inferior as a colourist. Nevertheless, there are many interesting figures, costumes, and lively attitudes in his compositions, notably in his Hospital frescoes, which, according to Lanzi, attracted the attention of Pinturicchio and Raphael. Domenico's earliest work, a "Madonna and Child with Angels," dated 1433, which may still be seen in the Siena Gallery, shows poorly assimilated Florentine influences, but it is of interest as the first Sienese painting in which the divine Child is painted in the nude.

Ansano di Pietro di Domenico, now known as SANO DI PIETRO, was the pupil of Sassetta, and has been called "the Fra Angelico of Siena," from the sweetness and depth of his religious feeling. Spiritual beauty in the faces of heavenly denizens, accuracy of drawing within certain limits, a lavish use of gold and brilliant colours—these were the qualities the Sienese demanded of their painters. All these Sano di Pietro gave them, but his feeling is less spiritual than Angelico's, his types are different, and he had little appreciation for light and shade. Sano's master, Sassetta, dying in 1460, while engaged in painting a fresco of "The Coronation of the Virgin" over the Roman Gate of Siena, desired it to be finished by none but his pupil. Inspired with true religious devotion, Sano di Pietro was one of the most important mystical painters that Siena ever produced, and his life must have been in keeping with his art, for he is described in the document that registers his death as "a famous painter and a man utterly dedicated to God."

VECCHIETTA, or to give him his correct name, Lorenzo di Pietro di Giovanni di Lando, is one of the most gifted sons of Siena, for he excelled not only as a painter but as an architect, sculptor, and goldsmith. Although no other Sienese sculptor approaches the great master-sculptor of Siena, Giacomo della Quercia, Vecchietta followed not unworthily in his footsteps. Even if in his bronze work his attention to anatomical detail is excessive, his style hard, and greatly influenced by the Florentines, Ghiberti and Donatello, yet when he turns from sculpture to painting he is a true Sienese, and but for him the Sienese School of painting might never have existed. While there are some fifty works by Sano di Pietro in the Accademia della Belle Arti, there are but

four by Vecchietta. He painted frescoes in the Baptistry, the Hospital, and the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, but his master-work is an altar-piece of "The Assumption of the Virgin," painted in 1461 for one of the chapels in the Duomo of Pienza.

Born after the three painters just mentioned, one of the most notable fifteenth-century Siennese artists, and one of the last, if not the last, to carry on the traditions of the pure Siennese School, was MATTEO DI GIOVANNI DI BARTOLO, sometimes called Matteo da Siena (1435-1495). He was born at Borgo San Sepolcro, the birthplace of Piero della Francesca, with whom he worked on the polyptych of which the central panel, "The Baptism of Christ," the work of Piero, is now in the National Gallery, London. He was possibly the pupil of Domenico di Bartolo or Vecchietta, and was influenced by his study of the works of Botticelli and Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo. His oldest authentic picture, "Virgin Enthroned with Angels," painted for the Servites, dated 1470, is now in the Siena Gallery, but his masterpiece, "Our Lady of the Snow," painted some seven years later, for the church under that invocation in Siena, surpasses the Servite Madonna in beauty of types, symmetry of proportions, and in colour. Many of this artist's works are to be seen in various churches of Siena, notably in S. Domenico, S. Agostino, S. Eugenia, S. Pietro Ovale, and in S. Sebastian. Some of them are memorable for their frank sincerity of feeling; the grace, beauty, and dignity of their angels and female figures; their freedom of line, and their richness and brilliance of colour; but Matteo is not successful in scenes requiring action, as in a favourite subject of his, "The Massacre of the Innocents," painted in 1471 for the Servi, which is full of exaggerated sentiment and is essentially melodramatic. Not one of his seven works in the Siena Gallery approaches the three now treasured in the National Gallery, London: his "Ecce Homo," "S. Sebastian," and "The Madonna of the Girdle." Matteo di Giovanni was probably the most versatile Siennese painter of his century, and, notwithstanding some of the Florentine influences to which he succumbed, he remained till the end of his life Siennese at heart and a faithful disciple of Simone Martini and the Lorenzetti.

About the middle of the century, there was born in Siena NEROCCHIO DI BARTOLOMMEO LANDI (1447-1500), a painter whose style is based on that of Vecchietta. He has been called "the very flower of the Siennese School of the fifteenth century." In his "Madonna and Child with SS. Jerome and Bernard" there is that subtle charm and refined feeling for beauty, which delights us in some of Simone Martini's work. It was this painting probably that prompted Berenson to refer to him as "Simone come to life again."

After Neroccio came Andrea Niccolo (1450-1529), Guidoccio Cozzarelli (1450-1516), Pietro di Domenico (1457-1506), Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1459-1502), and Bernardino Fungai (1460-1516). Francesco di Giorgio was a companion of Neroccio's and collaborated with him in many works, notably in some of the series depicting scenes from the life of S. Bernardino of Siena, which are now in the galleries of Florence, Siena, and Perugia. He attained greater fame as a military engineer than as a painter; as a designer of fortifications he was regarded as being almost equal to Leonardo da Vinci. Bernardino Fungai, the pupil of Benvenuto di Giovanni or Matteo da Siena, was associated with Pacchiarotti and influenced by Pinturicchio and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo. Both he and Girolamo di Benvenuto, the son of Benvenuto di Giovanni, a good colourist, were mediaeval painters who attempted to carry on the traditional manner of Siena. The last decades of the fifteenth century saw the birth of Giacomo Pacchiarotti (1474-1540), an artist of whom Robert Browning wrote a poem, but who looms larger in the history of Siena's political convulsions than in the history of her achievements in art; and of Girolamo del Pacchia (1477-1535) to whom modern scientific criticism has given many of the works formerly ascribed to Pacchiarotti.

The last decades of the century saw the culmination of the great change, that had been slowly coming over Sienese art. The conflicts between Siena and her neighbouring states, competition with powerful Florence, commercial depression, disorders, and revolutions, internal rot brought about by her own sinful and luxurious living which even the passionate appeals of the great S. Bernardino of Siena failed to stem, all these and many other reasons have been advanced by those who try to explain why Siena was in a sick state of decay in the fifteenth century. Then, too, the dearth of native artists, and the coming to Siena of the painters of other schools, on the invitation of the wealthy families of the city who contended with each other in the patronage of art, are other reasons advanced by those who strive to explain away the passing of this once "blithe and lively school," and the artistic revolution which the coming of outside artists inaugurated. But probably a better explanation of the decay and passing of Sienese art with all its spiritual fervour, delicate ornamentation, gesso-embellishment, drawing in the flat, and miniature-like delicacy of execution of an earlier age, is that the Sienese painters lived and worked too much within themselves, that they were too content to imitate and perpetuate—like the Byzantines, the Romans, and the Florentines after the death of Giotto and before the coming of Andrea Orcagna—the ideals and methods of the founders of their school. They did not learn from the decline of these schools that a sustained

system of slavish copying could lead only to mediocrity, to the abandonment of all initiative, and to the lack of desire for originality, strength, and virility.

Foreign sculptors were welcomed in Siena at the beginning of the century, notably the Florentines, Donatello and Ghiberti, but the painters of the other schools were practically excluded. The painters of Florence found their way to Rome, but ancient rivalry and political jealousy kept them from Siena, who looked with more friendly eyes towards Umbria and from Perugia invited Benedetto Bonfigli and Perugino within her walls. Then Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini, a native of Siena, who afterwards became Pope Pius III, being desirous of decorating the sacristy of the cathedral and the chapel of his family with pictures of events in the life of his predecessor, Pius II, another famous Siennese occupant of the throne of Peter, and Pandolfo Petrucci, who had usurped the government and was desirous of decorating the Palazzo and some of the churches, invited Pinturicchio and Signorelli to Siena. These artists were later followed by Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, better known as "Il Sodoma," who was born at Vercelli in Savoy, and two natives of Siena: Baldazzare Peruzzi and Domenico di Giacomo di Pace, also known as Domenico Beccafumi.

SODOMA (1477-1549) was born in Vercelli, in Lombardy, and was the pupil of Martino Spanzotti, a mediocre painter of Casale. He studied in Milan, perhaps under Leonardo da Vinci, from 1498 till 1501, when he went to Siena, and Siena almost immediately made him her own. The extant works of his first Siennese period, 1501-1507, distinguished by their pure style and careful execution, are his "Birth of Christ," and the "Deposition from the Cross," now in the Siena Gallery. Of his second Siennese period, 1510-1514, which began after his return from Rome where he had been employed with Perugino by Pope Julius II, until both were displaced by Raphael, are his "Flagellation," and his "Madonna with Child and Saints," now in Turin. In 1514 Sodoma went for the second time to Rome, where he painted the frescoes in the upper story of the Farnesina, the first of which is one of the most admirable works in later Italian Renaissance art, although it is weak in unity of composition. It is in his single figures, as in the frescoes in the Oratory of S. Bernardino, in Siena, and especially in his famous "S. Sebastian," that Sodoma shows this superiority. He is an unequal painter. Some of his works show carelessness and hastiness of execution. Indeed, he could not be classed among the Siennese painters — famed for their care of execution and their minute attention to detail — were it not that from 1501 till the end of his life in 1549 he worked almost entirely in Siena and because, Lombard though he was, he speedily picked up Siennese love

of detail, ornamentation, and exaggerated emotional effect, as in his much-lauded "Ecstasy of S. Catherine." He has an instinctive feeling for beauty, and is an accomplished artist in rendering female grace, childish mischief, and the nude with great charm. His "S. Sebastian," noted for its tawny colour, the atmospheric depth of its Tuscan landscape background, the perfect proportions of the youthful saint's body, and the spiritualised anguish in the martyr's eyes, is a study of the nude, and it was probably this picture, now in the Uffizi, which, although not above criticism—note the over-modelling of the figure and the cramped position of the angel above S. Sebastian's head—did much to establish his popular fame.

BALDAZZARE PERUZZI (1481-1537) was born in Siena and died in Rome. He was one of the most famous architects of the Renaissance, and derived much benefit from his studies under Bramante, Raphael, and Sangallo during the erection of S. Peter's in Rome. He was also a designer of mosaic decorations, and, as a painter, was an imitator of Raphael and Michelangelo—as was almost every artist of his day. He was a pupil in painting of the political revolutionary, Pacchiarotti, the assistant of Pinturicchio, and was influenced by Sodoma. His paintings with a few exceptions are to be found in Rome and Siena.

Domenico di Giacomo di Pace, also called DOMENICO BECCAFUMI (1486-1551), was born in Siena. In his art—as in the art of Sodoma and Peruzzi—there is little evidence of the old Byzantine traditions which had served Siena so long. Beccafumi's perspective, although not perfect, does not exactly spoil his works, he has a good knowledge of the use of light and shadow and can almost bear comparison with some of the best Umbrian painters; indeed, it may be said that he acquired the style of Perugino. He spent some two years in Rome, where he became enamoured of the works of Michelangelo, whom he afterwards copied rather weakly and not to the improvement of his own style, which became more mannered as he advanced in life. Besides working with Sodoma in the Oratory of S. Bernardino, Beccafumi executed a number of paintings in Siena, Florence, Pisa, and elsewhere, among which we may mention his "S. Catherine Receiving the Stigmata," now in the Siena Gallery. He was regarded as the best Siennese painter of his day after Bazzi.

The true Siennese School came to an end with Matteo di Giovanni and Neroccio di Landi in the middle of the century. The painters who followed these masters, notably, Sodoma, Peruzzi, and Beccafumi, belonged to an age, when Siennese art had lost its local characteristics and merely copied the other Renaissance schools. They built up an art almost their own, gathered

from the Lombardic, Umbrian, and Florentine Schools of their day, and produced what Berenson calls "a more singular and charming eclecticism — saved from the pretentiousness and folly usually controlling such movements by the sense for grace and beauty even to the last seldom absent from the Sienese." With the passing of the few and not distinguished followers of these painters, the story of the art of Siena — which for a time had vied with, and even excelled in spiritual feeling, the art of Florence — comes to an end, but to no inglorious end, for its influence on the art of the other Italian schools of painting was remarkable. Siena helped to mould the tendencies, if not to shape the ideals, of the painters of Perugia, Gubbio, and Fabriano, who were forming the School of Umbria. Siena started many famous Florentines, for example, Orcagna and Fra Angelico with their followers, on the quest for the beauty and charm of female figures, the grace of expression, the liveliness of action, and the soft, rich colouring we admire in their works. But above all the Sienese School is worthy of great praise, because for almost two centuries she strove for holiness in Christian art.

Before leaving the art of Siena to speak briefly of the art of "Umbria Santa," it may not be inappropriate to say here that for more than a thousand years, from the catacombs to the Reformation, Italian art — and notably Tuscan art of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and early fifteenth centuries — concerned itself almost exclusively with Jesus Christ and the mysteries and dogmas of the religion He founded. And surely, He, being God and being infinite and eternal, is the grandest subject of the sublime. Therefore, in taking Jesus Christ Himself as their chief subject, even the earliest and least skilled artistic progenitors of Duccio and the other Sienese painters down the years to Matteo di Giovanni and Neroccio di Landi, and the least known forerunners of Giotto and the other Florentine painters down the years to the successors of Fra Angelico, and the greatest of the later painters of these schools, with those of Umbria and Venice, all strove ceaselessly to reach sublime heights in their art. Italian painting progressed and rose nobly, when God and the things of God were the be-all and the end-all of its existence. But Italian painting, and for that matter all European painting, fell into the decline from which it has never recovered, when artists ceased to strive for perfection, when they ceased to strive for the sublime, which was when Jesus Christ, whether as a Child in His Mother's arms or as a blood-drained holocaust on Calvary's cross, slowly ceased to be their principal inspiration. Then it was that art began to sink, stage by stage, lower and lower, into the troughs of surrealism, in which it wallows at the present time.



Sassetta

JOURNEY OF THE MAGI



S. SEBASTIAN

Sodoma



THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

Gentile da Fabriano



THE ANNUNCIATION

Bonfigli

From the earliest times down to the present day, the great poets have realised that there is nothing new to write about; that only the poetaster seeks new themes; and that all great poetry has been occupied with variations on, let us say, a half-dozen well-defined themes: life, love, joy, sorrow, death, and the rest; and that all good poets have been quite content to go on writing where other good poets left off. Similarly, the Italian painters from Giotto to Titian, with whom we begin and end this outline of Italian painting, sought no new themes: Giotto and Orcagna attempted to paint the Last Judgement; so, too, centuries later, did Fra Bartolommeo and Michelangelo; and when Raphael and Titian painted the "Resurrection," they were merely giving the world their conceptions of a subject, which they knew had been treated in Ravenna as far back as the sixth century. There is no Italian artist worthy of the name, who has not painted his "Madonna and Child" or his "Madonna and Child with Saints." Jesus and His Virgin Mother Mary they painted a thousand times, and yet a thousand times. They painted the annunciation, the visitation, the nativity, the adoration of the Magi, the massacre of the innocents, the flight into Egypt, the presentation in the temple, the finding in the temple, and other events connected with the birth and boyhood of our Lord. Next they turned to the main events in His public life, such as the baptism in the Jordan, the miracle at Cana in Galilee, the woman taken in adultery, the resurrection of Lazarus; the transfiguration, and the last supper. Then they painted every episode of His sacred Passion, such as the agony in the garden, the betrayal by Judas, the denial of Peter, the scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, the bearing of the cross, the crucifixion, the deposition from the cross, the laying in the tomb, the resurrection, the ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. They painted the same sublime subjects, year after year, decade after decade, century after century, because they knew of none more wonderful, more touching, or more sublime, than the birth and life and death of Him who died that all men might live; and therein lay the fundamental greatness of Italian art. In the preceding chapters we have dealt many times with one or all of these subjects, and in the ensuing chapters we shall have to deal with the same subjects over and over again. The greatest masters of the Schools of Tuscany, Umbria, and Venice rightly left to the lesser men of later ages the inglorious task of seeking new subjects and — in searching for fresh fields to conquer — of inaugurating the revolts, which have driven art into the wilderness of desolation, in which it roams lost to-day.

CHAPTER EIGHT

UMBRIAN ART

From Gentile da Fabriano to Perugino

UMBRIA, perhaps so called from the shady forests (*umbra*) of the Apennines, *Umbria Mystica*, which rivals Tuscany as the mother of great artists, constitutes the single province of Perugia, the largest in the peninsula, and forms the very heart of Italy. Surrounded by fertile Tuscany, the Marches, the mountains of Abruzzi, sunny Latium, and the rugged Sabine hills, it is a land fragrant even to this day with memories of S. Benedict and S. Francis, of S. Scholastica, the sister of S. Benedict, and of S. Clare, the spiritual sister of S. Francis. In the early Middle Ages—when the political edifice originated by Augustus was crumbling to dust under the blows of the barbarians, when social dismemberment seemed complete, when confusion, corruption, despair, devastation, and death were everywhere—Umbria, through the great S. Benedict, saved the ancient learning and diffused rules of life, labour, culture, and human dignity. And later, when the crusades, while reanimating Christian heroism, awakened a thirst for adventure and a lust for dominion with its consequent corruption, when the communes had won liberty at the price of peace, and when internecine strife ran red over Italy, Umbria raised that Francis who chid the wolf of Gubbio for “spoiling and killing God’s creatures without His permission”; that Francis who wrote the “Cantic of the Sun,” which is not an invocation for pardon, an aspiration to martyrdom, nor the expression of longing for the happiness of heaven, but a sheer paean of praise to almighty God for creating the incorruptible beauty of the sky, sun, moon, and stars; for making the wind and the clouds, stillness, fire, water, plants, fruits, flowers, and the course of life with its joys, its sorrows, and the mystery of death. Later still, when the Church saw her sacred temples deserted and her sacraments neglected, when in other parts of Italy pagan influences were permeating art, literature, and life as a whole, Umbria once again came to

the assistance of the Church by producing painters who exercised a softening influence on the realism of the Florentine School and fought for Christian holiness in art.

In Umbria the memory of the life and teaching of S. Francis has been perpetuated throughout the centuries. It seems to enfold in a sense of mysticism every one of the small, old-world towns — each crowning and clinging to its separate hillside, with houses clustered round a campaniled church, like children round a mother's knee, seeming to have fallen asleep in the sun centuries ago. We remember again in quiet reflective moments the mediaeval atmosphere of Assisi, with its triple temple in which Giotto depicted the life drama of S. Francis; Spoleto with its cathedral, where Fra Filippo Lippi, while painting the life of the Blessed Virgin, closed his eyes in death, leaving behind him frescoes, which even in their ruin to-day tell the world of Italy's mediaeval faith. We remember the peace of red-towered Citta della Pieve, the birthplace of Perugino, the magnificence of the Cathedral of Orvieto, and the miracle of Bolsena. The cathedral was built to commemorate this miracle, later painted so nobly by Raphael opposite "The School of Athens" in the Vatican.

We remember the solemnity of Gubbio, with its memories of that Oderigi who was sung of by Dante and was the forerunner of all the Umbrian painters. We remember the charm of Perugia, with the story of S. Bernardino of Siena woven in the delicate marble tracery of the Agostino — Perugia from whose precipitous terraces all Umbria lay spread at our feet. Perugia we must place at the head of the various local centres of painting, which form the far-famed School of Umbria, which came into existence just as the short-lived School of Siena lay dying. We can trace at Gubbio, Camerino, Foligno, Gualdo, Fabriano, Urbino, and elsewhere, the formation of the art of Umbria in the works of Gentile da Fabriano, Ottaviano Nelli, and others distinctly Umbrian. We can trace its development in the works of Benedetto Bonfigli, Niccolo di Foligno, Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, and other artists profoundly influenced by the great Florentines, Giotto, Angelico, Lippi, and Gozzoli. We can see it reach its greatest perfection in the paintings of Perugino and Pinturicchio, and we behold its triumph in the works of the greatest Umbrian of them all, Raphael.

In no nation the world has known, in no European school of art, was the spirit of the painters more purely and more absolutely religious than in Umbria. Their art was perhaps only another form of that religious spirit, which produced the teachings of S. Francis, and which flourished in the peaceful atmosphere of the remote country hill-towns more readily than in

the larger cities in the time of the profane Renaissance. No European gallery, we can recall, is so exclusively devoted to one set of men as the gallery at Perugia. There we can trace — without our attention being distracted by the work of other schools — the rise and fall of Umbrian art. There we can learn why it is said that early Umbrian frescoes are merely enlarged miniature paintings. There we begin to realise what is meant by painting being the handmaiden of religion; and there we become conscious of two of the most remarkable characteristics of the Umbrian School, namely that its painters rarely painted portraits, so desirous were they of illustrating the stories of the Gospels, and that one of their greatest delights was the painting of *gonfaloni* or processional banners.

Leaving aside the work of early miniaturists, Umbrian painting, or the school that flourished east of the main chain of the Apennines and had its centres at Gubbio and Fabriano, may be said to have begun with GENTILE DA FABRIANO (1360–1428), probably a pupil of Allegretto Nuzi and a co-worker with Pisanello in the Doge's Palace in Venice. His style, though affiliated to the Gothic and founded on the Sienese, has much in common with and many points of resemblance to both Florentine and Flemish painting of the fifteenth century. When Roger van der Weyden made his journey through Italy in 1450, he thought Gentile da Fabriano "the greatest man in Italy," and those who have been to the Accademia of Florence and gazed on all the mediæval splendour of the age of chivalry depicted in his "Adoration of the Magi" will not wonder at this tribute. In this one painting we behold mounted knights and ladies, grooms and huntsmen, jewelled accoutrements, sumptuous brocades, ornamented trappings of rare richness, flowery meads, verdant hills, romantic castles, and beasts and birds, painted in a manner in keeping with Roger van der Weyden's own ideas of art. Much of the Florentine influence here becomes evident. Its colours are of rainbow purity and brightness with a profusion of burnished gold in the decorative details, and the figures are extremely graceful in pose. We have often thought what wonderful drawings Gentile da Fabriano could have made had he known and had he illustrated Malory's "Morte d'Arthur." Although he belongs to the Umbrian School, Gentile da Fabriano had practically no followers in Umbria, but his love of bright colours, the richness of his ornamental details, and his sense of constructive firmness greatly stimulated the early painters of Venice.

Before settling in Florence to spend the closing years of his life, Gentile had worked in his native Fabriano, in Brescia, in Venice, in Perugia and other Umbrian towns, and in Rome for Pope Martin V. This Pontiff invited

him, probably in 1421, to decorate the ceiling of the Church of S. John Lateran and to carry out other works, which have all disappeared, with the exception of a fragment of a fresco said to represent the head of Charlemagne. His most important work, after his "Adoration of the Magi" already referred to, is the polyptych he painted about 1425 for the Church of S. Niccolo di la d'Arno, now in the Uffizi. The saints in this work, which is known as the Quaratesi altar-piece, from the family name of the donor, are S. Mary Magdalen, S. John Baptist, S. George, and S. Nicholas of Bari. On the cope of the latter are painted some vivid scenes from the Passion.

After Gentile da Fabriano's time, there was no important development in Umbrian painting, for OTTAVIANO NELLI, a follower and pupil of Allegretto Nuzi, although an artist of some standing, was unable to surpass—indeed he was unable to approach—his contemporary. The graceful but drooping forms of his female figures, the annoying and needlessly symmetrical arrangement of his compositions, and the riot of his ornamental detail, all tend to make his most important existing work, "The Madonna of the Belvedere," in the Church of S. Maria Nuova at Gubbio, look perilously like an ornamental pattern.¹ About the middle of the century, however, Umbrian painting began to feel the influences of the Florentine School, for in the year 1449 Benozzo Gozzoli, one of the most prolific and interesting of all Italian fresco-painters, after leaving Orvieto, where he had been assisting his master, Fra Angelico, settled at Montefalco, near Foligno. He painted in Umbria till 1456, and, although he had none of Fra Angelico's pure faith or spiritual exaltation, being first and foremost a genre painter, he spread his master's influence among the Umbrians and led them to a clearer study of Florentine art.² The poetic naturalism, the love of ornament, and the joyousness of devotional feeling, which Benozzo in some measure inherited from Fra Angelico, made a great appeal to the inhabitants of the hill-set towns and valleys of Umbria. Fortunately, too, an artist of Foligno, Pietro Antonio Mezzastri, who had worked with Gozzoli at Montefalco, handed on these traditions to Bonfigli. Through him they were continued in the works of Niccolo di Foligno and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, and thus the blending of Florentine and Umbrian art blossomed to such perfection as may be found in the best works of Perugino and Pinturicchio.

¹ BENEDETTO BONFIGLI was born, it would seem in Perugia, about 1420 or 1425, and died in or after 1496, from which year there are no traces of him. He was perhaps the pupil of Boccati, and was influenced by Domenico Veneziano, by Piero della Francesca, by Fra Angelico (through Gozzoli), and, perhaps, by Fra Filippo Lippi. Nothing is definitely known of his early

career. We know he was married, for Mariotti says: "certainly he had a wife, and he had her of such a sort that she caused him nothing but anxiety; moreover, he was in constant strife with her."

The first authentic mention of Bonfigli's work is when he was called on to paint the magistrate's chapel in the Palazzo Pubblico in 1454. We find here that he gave such languid and intermittent attention to this work that it was unfinished at the time of his death. When the chapel was about half painted, Fra Filippo Lippi was invited to criticise and value Bonfigli's work. He found the paintings to be all that could be desired, and advised the sum of four hundred florins to be paid to the artist. According to Lanzi, Perugino studied under this painter and according to Vasari, Bonfigli accompanied Pinturicchio, his young friend, to Rome and helped him in the decoration of the Vatican. But there is no positive evidence to bolster these assertions.

Bonfigli's most ambitious, if not his best, works are his frescoes representing the lives of S. Louis of Toulouse and S. Ercolano, the patron saint of Perugia. Here, again, we see the gorgeous pageantry of the glad life of the Umbrian capital. As we stand before them, we wonder how it was that, while the greatest of the Umbrian masters were depicting the features of Christ, His Blessed Mother, and His saints on the walls of her churches and public buildings, ferocious Umbrian tyrants were reddening the hilly streets of Perugia with the blood of their victims, and we find an answer in the questions asked by Carrado Ricci: "But if in Umbria flourished the prickly thistle of combat and the poisonous hemlock of treachery, may one not also say that the roses of S. Francis and the lilies of S. Clare flourished equally? Is not piety perhaps greater when and where sorrow is deeper, love larger where hatred is more fierce, prayer stronger when and where blasphemy is more powerful?"

Only in Perugia may Bonfigli be studied to advantage, for there, in the Pinacoteca, are gathered his best works, including one of his five *gonfalon*i, or banners. The others are in the sacristy of S. Francesco at Prato, in S. Fiorenzo, in S. Maria Nuova, and in S. Lorenzo. These *gonfalon*i, so typical of Umbria, must be studied with a knowledge of the events from which they originated, but their origin cannot be dealt with in this brief mention of Benedetto Bonfigli, who concerned himself so much with religion and the beauty of religious meditation, and who is, with Gentile da Fabriano, the founder of the School of Umbria, which became so famous that it exerted a profound influence on the whole history of Renaissance art.

Foligno is sunk in a basin of a plain, in the broad valley of Spoleto, not far from Assisi, through which the waters of the Clitumnus — referred to

by Macaulay in his "Horatius," and praised by Lord Byron and Carducci—run slowly to the Tiber. It is known to this day as the city of the Holy Angels, or the town of the little towers, which we see as a background to Raphael's "Madonna di Foligno." In this little industrial town, in the Church of S. Niccolo, may be seen the magnificent altar-piece painted by NICCOLO DI LIBERATORE DA FOLIGNO, called by Vasari Niccolo d'Alunno, who was born there about the year 1430, who studied under the Florentine, Benozzo Gozzoli, and who is now regarded by the ablest critics as the greatest painter of the true Umbrian School before the rise of Perugino. His work is full of an intense emotional feeling, which might be unpleasing and quasi-sentimental, were it not so transparently sincere. "The result is," as Berenson rightly says, "that with precisely the same purpose as the late Bolognese, he holds our attention, even gives us a certain pungent dolorous pleasure; while we turn away from Guido Reni with disgust." A provincial painter, indeed, is this Umbrian, whose art, if occasionally overemotional, is entirely devoted to the sanctuary; a fit product of the region that produced S. Francis of Assisi, Blessed Colomba of Rieti, and Blessed Angela of Foligno; a dreamer who heeds not life as it drowns away, so intent is he in striving in his own poor way to conceive the sublime in every picture of his Creator and Saviour he attempts to paint.

There is a "Coronation" of Niccolo's in a side chapel of the church already referred to in Foligno; a painting in the Pinacoteca in Perugia; and a polypptych in the sacristy of the Duomo of Gualdo Tadino. Three predella panels have been dismembered from the large altar-piece of the side chapel of S. Niccolo in Foligno, painted in 1492, and are now in the Louvre. A *Pieta*, of which fragments only remain in the Cathedral of Assisi, was regarded as his best work. Niccolo is said by Mariotti—as Bonfigli is said by Lanzi—to have been the first tutor of the great Umbrian master Perugino.

To do justice to Umbrian painting, to deal in detail with the Umbro-Sienese, the Umbro-Florentine, and the Umbro-Romagnol painters would require a good-sized volume made up of critical studies of the works of dozens of painters from Alegretto Nuzi, Gentile da Fabriano, and Lorenzo Salimbeni down to Giannicola Manni, Bernardino di Mariotto, and Lo Spagna. But in the present outline sketch this could not possibly be accomplished, even if any good purpose could be served by producing a mere catalogue of artists. So we have selected but five Umbrian painters for special mention here, believing that a study of their work will assist the inquiring student to trace the rise and development of the art of *Umbria Santa*. In the work of Gentile da Fabriano, the beginnings of Umbrian art find their true

expression, for in it there is a blend of the strength of Florence, the exquisite delicacy of Siena, and the glittering colour of Gubbio. In the work of Bonfigli there is given in turn, for his own age, correctness of perspective, beauty of colouring, love of detail, and a spirituality gotten from Fra Angelico through Gozzoli. Next, in the works of Niccolo da Foligno one seems to feel the intensity of the painter's desire to picture the denizens of heaven to the exclusion of all else, a purpose which became such an outstanding characteristic of Umbrian art. And finally, in the works of FIORENZO DI LORENZO — about twenty of which are to be found in the gallery in Perugia — there is a sense of space and atmosphere, an intensity of sentiment, and at the same time an austerity, an unaffectedness, a thoughtfulness, strength, and virility, which apparently cannot be seen by those who criticise him for his crude colouring, his uncertain drawing, and his rugged forms but fail to look deeper.

Scarcely anything is known of the life of Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, save that he was working between the year 1472, when we meet with reference to him in the documents relating to the altar-piece of the "Madonna Enthroned Surrounded by Saints," in S. Maria Nuova, and the year 1521, when "an arbitration" was made by him, the document of which has been preserved in the Archivio Notorale at Perugia. He is said to have been born in or about 1440, to have died in 1521, and to have been a pupil of Bonfigli or, perhaps, of Piero Antonio Mezzastri. Undoubtedly he was influenced by Benozzo Gozzoli; by Piero della Francesca, of whose profound influence on Umbrian art we shall speak elsewhere; by Luca Signorelli; and by the staid Andrea Verrocchio. He was a contemporary of Perugino, who is, with the sole exception of Raphael, the greatest master of the School of Umbria.

The very excellence of some of Lorenzo's work, notably his depiction of the wonderful miracles of S. Bernardino of Siena — of which modern scientific criticism has striven to rob him — and his "Nativity" or "Adoration of the Shepherds," have led to him being ranged as a second-rate artist, for the reason that the work done by him had been ascribed to others. Some of his earlier paintings were assigned by certain critics to Perugino in his early days or to Pinturicchio, and some of his latter work to Pinturicchio or Ghirlandaio. Fiorenzo has been charged with being an erratic painter by those who should have realised that like his follower, Perugino, he had an early, a middle, and a late period, and that he painted in a variety of styles. There is, for example, a world of difference between his *Pieta*, once hung at the entrance of the Sala di Fiorenzo, and his other *Pieta* in the Gabinetto. In their attempts, consequently, to explain away his various styles, the lead-

ing European art historians have made him the pupil of practically every famous fifteenth-century Italian master, including Andrea Mantegna.

Of all the works we have seen by this early Umbrian, we admire most his "Madonna with Saints" and his "Nativity." In the first named, although it is sadly defaced, the most beautiful figure is that of S. Catherine, and in the last named the most beautiful figure is that of the Blessed Virgin, whose voluminous blue robe seems to accentuate the chaste, slender girlishness of her body.

Twenty-six miles to the southwest of Perugia, above the Lakes Trasimene and Chiusi, with a wide view southwards towards Rome and northwards towards Cortona, is the little red brick-built Umbrian hill-town of Castello della Pieve—renamed Citta della Pieve by Pope Clement VIII. Here Pietro, the son of Cristoforo Vannucci, was born in 1446. Petrus de Castro Plebis, as he preferred to sign himself, or PERUGINO, as he is known to us to-day, was not the greatest product of the Umbrian School, but he was the first artist who brought it to the notice of the world. Of the painters we have just mentioned, Gentile da Fabriano had been born the best part of a century, and Ottaviano Nelli nearly half a century before him; Benedetto Bonfigli was his senior by some twenty-one and Niccolo da Foligno by some sixteen years; and so it may be said that much more than the foundations of the great edifice of Umbrian art had been built, when Perugino first saw the light in the sun-drenched Umbrian hamlet, almost five centuries ago. The boy, who was destined to leave behind him an enduring mark in the history of art, and to train pupils, Raphael amongst others, whose tendencies he guided in the direction of the spiritual and purifying elements of life, was born of poor people of good origin, who had, according to Mariotti, "enjoyed the right of citizenship since 1427."

According to Vasari, "he was made the drudge of a Perugian painter, who was not particularly distinguished in his calling," but notwithstanding this hardly flattering reference, it appears that Benedetto Bonfigli or Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, or, according to Morelli, Piero della Francesca himself may have been his first master. The fact is that we must never take the Florentine writer too seriously when he refers slightly to artists of the Sienese, Umbrian, or other Italian Schools. Berenson agrees with Vasari that in Florence, Perugino came under the influence of Andrea Verrocchio. But although Mariotti, Pascoli, and Morelli deny this, it is well known that the Umbrian painted Verrocchio's portrait in an "Adoration of the Magi" for the Convent of the Gesuati. This work was destroyed with other paintings in 1529. However, whether under the scientifically minded goldsmith-painter or

another master, he studied so arduously and whole-heartedly, without ever losing his essentially Umbrian style, that ten years after he had entered Florence as an unknown student, he left it again as an acknowledged master en route for Rome to paint a portion of the Sistine Chapel, in company with the greatest painters of his day.

Perugino's early works such as his Palazzo Pubblico frescoes in Perugia, painted in 1475, and his Cergueto frescoes, with the exception of "S. Sebastian," are ruined or destroyed. His earliest extant work, painted in 1482, is his Vatican painting "The Delivery of the Keys to S. Peter." His other Sistine frescoes have been obliterated to make place for Michelangelo's "Last Judgment." Lost, too, are the works he executed in Rome, in 1491, for the cardinal who afterwards became Pope Julius II, with the single exception of the famous Albani painting, "The Adoration of the Holy Child." Between the years 1484 and 1500, Perugino executed some of his greatest masterpieces, including "The Crucifixion," "Christ Praying in Gethsemane," and the *Pieta* now in the Accademia, Florence; "The Vision of S. Bernard"; and "The Crucifixion" in S. Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, Florence. The decoration of the Cambio, or Bourse, of Perugia, begun in 1499, which probably should have meant in the art of Perugino what the Stanze of the Vatican meant in the art of Raphael, marks the beginning of his decline. The figures in these frescoes have been commented on by art historians of every age since their completion. They are said to be lifeless, vague, and effeminate. As decoration his frescoes are admitted to be successful, graceful, and charming, but his composition is said to be poor and worthless and his figures to lack unity and cohesion. In our opinion, those who criticise Perugino so adversely know the real Perugino even less intimately than did the Chapter of the Cathedral of Orvieto or the Signoria of Venice, who strove to induce him to paint hordes of damned souls being strangled by demons, and maddened warriors locked in mortal combat. Any such subjects were foreign to his nature, and in the execution of them he would undoubtedly have failed ignominiously, had he not been wise enough to refuse such commissions. Neither did Isabella d'Este, Duchess of Mantua, understand the placid, serene, religious temperament of Perugino, although unfortunately, he acceded to her request and painted for her the "Combat of Love and Chastity," now in the Louvre — a production so weak and spiritless that an eminent Italian writer wittily and correctly said of it: "the voluptuousness of the allegorical subject seems submerged in holy water!" Perugino knew that he was not a master of monumental design; that he could not compose as Ghirlandaio or Signorelli composed. He knew that on him had not been bestowed the imaginative

powers of many of his Florentine contemporaries. For a while, indeed, he strove to steep himself in the realism of Florence, but he was an ascetic and an idealist, and so Florence failed to mould him. After giving attention to design, simple composition, and facial expression, Perugino depended on colour, architecture, and landscape to help him to complete his pictures, where many of his isolated figures, including those in his *Cambio* frescoes, are scarcely more than an excuse for painting the space in which they stand and the landscapes behind them.

Perugino's object was decorative illustration, not the illusion of reality; and those who criticise his isolated figures should remember that the greatness of antique sculpture consisted above all in creating a single type and bringing it to perfection. Are not the crucified Christ, the Blessed Virgin, S. John the Baptist, and S. Sebastian types, that Perugino had learned how to render so beautiful that they were copied by his pupils who in turn transmitted his conceptions to their own pupils, even as the Greek master sculptors transmitted their aesthetic canons to generations of scholars? And did not Perugino state a truth to a reproachful patron, when he said, in regard to some of the saints he painted with such monotonous repetition, that if they were beautiful once they were equally beautiful a second time? And speaking of single figures, and with special reference to Perugino's "S. Sebastian" now in the Louvre (not unlike the saint in the Fiesole altar-piece, now in the Uffizi), is there a more graceful isolated figure in the whole range of Umbrian art?

But, admitting that Perugino's powers declined, that his well-known and frequently reproduced S. Michael is the most un-archangel-like archangel ever painted, that his classical heroes in the *Cambio* have the faces of dreamy Umbrian mystics, that they are simple Christians masquerading as Greeks and Romans; admitting that his studio became a "factory" for the quick-turning-out of "pious" pictures, that he destroyed himself by subordination to mere handicraft, that popular demand led to mechanical production, and that his figures became stereotyped, and were, in the end, entirely the work of his assistants; admitting all these things, we say it was as a painter of space and landscape that Perugino in his day stood supreme. He was not only a painter of religious subjects but an excellent portrait painter. For this we need but point to his realistic portraits of Abate Baldassare and Don Biagio Milanese, still to be seen in the Accademia of Florence, and to his famous painting of Francesca della Opere. He was also, without doubt, the greatest landscapist Italy had produced at that time; and even in the years of his decline, when the figures of his madonnas and saints

became listless and lifeless, his eye still sought new beauties in the sylvan solitudes of Umbria to be reproduced as backgrounds for his madonnas and his languidly and gracefully posed saints.

Perugino is and ever will be known as a painter of landscape. We should not dare mention him, if we may so put it, in the same breath with, say, Turner or Constable, and yet what a wealth of Italian landscape reveals itself to us in his paintings—what wonderful vistas of earth and sky and space! If we think for a moment of his "Christ Praying in Gethsemane," his "Adoration of the Magi," his "Christ on the Cross," his "Entombment," his "Madonna and Child with Saints" in Bologna, his painting of the same subject in Perugia, of his National Gallery triptych, or his Albani polyptych, we are forced to realise that he simply could not resist the impulse to paint in backgrounds of soft sky and of the hills and valleys where corn and wine and oil grow together in the same field. Perugino loved Umbria, not with a passionate but with a calm, quiet love that knew no ending. And so, when he painted one of his masterpieces in his portrait of Francesca della Opere, or even when he painted his famous fresco of "The Crucifixion," which is, perhaps, the most perfect expression of his art, we are not given a distant glimpse of the rooftops of Jerusalem behind the slender cross on which hangs the dead Christ, but we are given instead the hills of Italy, a winding river, delicate trees, and a sky that is serene, benign, almost holy. In this masterpiece, a subject to him so full of exquisite tragedy, Perugino strives, it seems to us, to suggest the beauty of the presence of God, and the abiding peace the death of His beloved Son brought to all mankind.

In the year 1500 Perugino painted for the monks of Vallombrosa his well-known "Assumption of the Virgin," represented with SS. Michael, John Gualbert, Dominic, and Bernard. This figure of the Blessed Virgin has not been surpassed in any of his many other Madonna paintings. In 1502 he was painting in Siena, in 1508, in Rome, and in 1512 he was back in Perugia buying land and houses. Later we hear of him at Trevi, Spello, at Citta della Pieve, his birthplace, where he painted in 1517. Perugino died in 1524, in time of the plague, which gave rise to the rumour that he was buried in unconsecrated ground because he was an atheist. He had prepared his own tomb in the Church of the Annunciata in Florence, twenty years before his death, and the Augustinians were ready to receive his body in Perugia, when fresh wars and the plague made such a course impossible. There are no grounds for doubting the chroniclers who state that he died as he lived—a true son of the Church he had served so well.

CHAPTER NINE

UMBRO-FLORENTINE AND UMBRO-ROMAGNOL PAINTERS

Francesca, da Forli, Santi, and Signorelli

IN THE previous chapter we have endeavoured to show that the rise of the great Umbrian School of painting owed its inception not only to the Schools of Foligno and Perugia, with Niccolo and Perugino as their representatives, but to the various small Transapennine schools. We have stressed the importance of the School of Gubbio, which culminated in Ottaviano Nelli, and of Fabriano, whence issued Allegretto Nuzi and his world-famed pupil, Gentile. Those who wish to become thoroughly conversant with the original character of the Umbrian School should, moreover, remember that the painters who covered the walls of the convent churches of Assisi were not Umbrians, neither were the artists who worked in Perugia; for the most part they were Tuscans. We must also, before speaking of the work of the greatest of all Umbrian painters, Raphael of Urbino, make brief mention of the work of four other artists, who were neither Florentines nor Perugians, but who, by their ability and earnestness exerted a powerful influence on Umbrian painting. Sieneese emotionalism and Florentine naturalism blended to make Umbrian painting, and the resultant form did much to further the progress of all Italian art.

The first and greatest of this band, Pietro di Benedetto of the Franceschi, better known as Piero della Francesca, was born at Borgo San Sepolcro, in Umbria. He belonged to a group of central Italian painters known as the Romagnol School, and was famed for having begun the "space-composition" movement, namely, the inclusion of space and distance in the design of a picture, as though it were not a flat surface, but possessed actual depth. The second, Melozzo da Forli, who was born at Forli in Romagna, was a master of foreshortening, and was one of the first ever to attempt the foreshortening of figures on ceilings. The third member of the group, Giovanni Santi, was,

perhaps, the least important as an artist and the most important as a man, for he was destined to become the father of one of the greatest artists the world has ever known. The fourth, Luca Signorelli, born, it is generally believed, in Cortona, was—in his absorption in the human form, in his development of the representation of the nude, and in his subordination of colour to light and shade values—the immediate precursor of Michelangelo.

PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA (c. 1418–1492), the son of an influential notary, sprung from a family long identified with the government of Borgo San Sepolcro, was the pupil it is believed, of Domenico Veneziano and was influenced by both Uccello and Donatello. He devoted himself to scientific pursuits, became the associate of the mathematician, Fra Luca Pacioli, who was a friend of Leonardo da Vinci, wrote a “Treatise on Perspective,” which gave him a reputation beyond Italy, and appeared to be as much concerned with the theory of art as with the practice of it. He experimented in perfecting mediums for oil painting, solved problems of perspective so well that he outdistanced his contemporaries in the representation of space depth and in his study of the effects of light in painting. Indeed, it has been said that one of the two frescoes he painted for Nicholas V in the Vatican, namely, “The Vision of S. Constantine,” suggested to Raphael the remarkable effect of light in that painter’s “Deliverance of S. Peter,” of which we shall speak later.

Piero assisted his master, Domenico Veneziano, in his works in S. Maria Nuova in Florence, in 1439, and from that year little is known of his life till 1445, when he was commissioned to paint the “Madonna della Misericordia,” as an altar-piece for the Chapel of the Brotherhood of the Misericordia in Borgo San Sepolcro, whence it was removed in 1903 to the Municipio. Later, in company with Veneziano, he painted frescoes in the old church of Our Lady of Loreto, which was destroyed in 1465 or soon afterwards. In the year 1451 he decorated the Church of S. Francesco at Rimini, for that arch-villain, Sigismondo Malatesta, the Lord of Rimini, who is said to have murdered two of his wives. Sigismondo is painted in perfect profile, as kneeling and venerating his patron saint.

In 1469 we hear of him as the guest of Raphael’s father at Urbino, when he probably executed the now famous portraits of Federigo da Montefeltro and of his wife, Battista Sforza, now in the Uffizi. These, with “The Baptism of Christ,” in the National Gallery, London, are the works by which he is most widely known. The Urbino portraits reveal the technical excellence of Piero’s improvement in the method of oil painting. Duke Federigo, who had lost his right eye and had his nose broken in a tourney, is seen in sharp

profile facing the equally sharp profile of his homely countenanced wife. All the essential details of these portraits are rendered with the meticulous care of a miniaturist. The painter's conscientious realism will be seen in the fine modelling of the duke's face, in the four warts on his cheek, and in the jewelled head-ornament and the collar of pearls round his wife's throat, while the atmospheric river landscape with its white-sailed boats and faint blue mountains outlined in the distance, that forms the background of the portraits, suggests, in a way that is difficult to define, infinite space. Umbria boasted no cities, only little hill-towns, and the sense of spaciousness in Piero's landscapes, as in those of Perugino, is perhaps due in no small measure to the nature of the country from which these painters sprang.

The landscape background of his "Baptism of Christ in the Jordan" has also been painted with extreme care. We see a castle with a road leading to it through fields studded with trees, whose foliage he has carefully studied. The baptism of our Lord is treated in a most unconventional way. Our Saviour stands gravely, as though absorbed in Himself, in mid-stream, while S. John the Baptist pours water from a scallop shell upon His head, above which the Holy Ghost appears in the form of a dove. There are three angels in the picture and, some distance away, a man undressing — apparently with a view of being baptised after our Lord, and, beyond this man, four other figures in robes of the East. But our Saviour and His precursor seem to be unaware of their presence. They are aloof, detached, and oblivious of all save the ceremony that is being performed. The face of our Lord is not beautiful; it is solemn, and although less awe inspiring than Piero's Christ in his "Resurrection" in the Borgo San Sepolcro, it is akin to it.

The San Sepolcro masterpiece, a strange majestic painting of Piero's, is accounted by many competent judges one of the most beautiful representations of the triumph of Christ ever painted. In his "Baptism" the carefully studied reflections of portions of the landscape and the bright garments of the four distant figures in the deep quiet part of the Jordan, and the running water — shallow in the foreground, and the clear pebbly bottom of the stream bed are executed in a manner which makes this treasure of the National Gallery a splendid specimen of Piero della Francesca's unique blend of science, art, and imagination.

This painting is also an excellent example of Piero's perspective method. Not satisfied with Uccello's method, he sought some means of suggesting space depth upon the flat panel. Knowing no more than Uccello of atmosphere or the gradations of colour because of its presence, Piero had to rely upon composition and design to gain his end. He would begin by drawing

a globe in perspective and would then fit his composition into the diagram.

Piero della Francesca later painted in Ferrara, in the Palazzo Schifanoia, for Duke Borso, and in Rome for Nicholas V. His greatest achievements in fresco painting, "The Story of the True Cross," in the Church of S. Francesco in Arezzo, which are worthy of comparison with Masaccio's Carmine masterpieces, were executed probably between 1460 and 1466. A late work of Piero's, probably one of his last paintings, is his "Nativity" in the National Gallery, London, remarkable for the gentleness of the Virgin adoring her Son, the sweetness of her face, the elaborate detail of her dress, and for the splendid drawing of the hands, ankles, and feet of the singing angels. They are more tender types than those seen in many of his works, which are generally primeval, strong, and impassive.

Piero's position in the development of Italian art is a unique and important one. His experiment in oil medium show him as a pioneer and a pathfinder; his treatises, *Libellus de quinque corporibus regularibus* and *De prospectiva pingendi*, as a geometrician and a teacher; and his frescoes at Arezzo, as one of the greatest masters of decorative art of the fifteenth century. His most famous pupils were Perugino and Signorelli, to whom he taught the good drawing, the solid modelling, and the broad massing of shadows, which are so characteristic of his own paintings. In his day he was without an equal, and will for all time rank as one of the major painters of the Renaissance. Corrado Ricci has summed up Piero in a noble tribute: "Piero della Francesca is one of the notable plants of the sylvan scenes of Italy. His roots go deep down into the consciousness of our race, even to the mysterious strata of the Etruscan soul; through our art his branches spread beyond our sight. Mingled with the tender olive of Perugia, the hardy maple of Cortona, and the fresh myrtle of Forli, they end by interlacing themselves with the powerful oak of Michelangelo and the glimmering laurel of Raphael." Piero della Francesca's testament is recorded on July 5, 1478, and he was buried in the Cathedral of Borgo San Sepolcro in 1492.

Very little is known of the career of MELOZZO DA FORLI (c. 1438-1494), one of the most remarkable founders of the Umbrian School of painting, who was born in the little town of Forli, in the plain between Bologna and Rimini. He is said to have been a pupil of Piero della Francesca, and also to have studied under Ansuino di Forli, who was an associate of Andrea Mantegna when the Paduan was at work on the frescoes of the Eremitani Chapel. He was in Rome in 1472, where he painted in the Church of SS. Apostoli the frescoes of the "Ascension of Christ" for Cardinal Riario della Rovere, nephew of Sixtus IV. This pontiff, the first of the Renaissance popes,



OUR LADY APPEARS TO S. BERNARD

Perugino



FEDERIGO DA MONTEFELTRO

Piero della Francesca



FOUNDING OF THE VATICAN LIBRARY

Melozzo da Forlì



DEPOSITION (Detail)

Luca Signorelli

ralded Julius II and Leo X, and made himself the benefactor of succeeding generations by founding the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Library. When the Church of SS. Apostoli was rebuilt in 1711, the central figure of Christ, much repainted, was cut away and is now preserved in the Quirinal Palace. The figures of some of his angels were formerly kept in the large crypt of S. Peter's.

About 1475 Melozzo painted a fresco, which was greatly damaged while being transferred to canvas, representing the installation of the learned Platina as Prefect of the Vatican Library, now in the Vatican Gallery. It is a picture of historical importance, interesting for the likenesses it gives of a famous family. Near the pope stand two of his nephews, Pietro Riario on the right of the papal throne, and facing him is Giuliano della Rovere, afterwards Pope Julius II. In the centre is the kneeling figure of Platina—librarian of the Vatican and historian of the popes—a scholarly looking man with an abnormally square jaw. Behind the librarian stand two other nephews of the pope, Cardinal Giovanni Rovere and Giralomo Riario. The picture is stately and impressive, and there is a fine sense of loftiness and length in its elaborate architectural background. When Sixtus IV formed the Roman Academy of S. Luke, he invited Melozzo to become one of its first members. Melozzo did so, and afterwards signed some of his works *Melotus Pi. Pa*" (*Melotus Pictor Papalis*—Melozzo Papal Painter). He is also said to have painted some of the portraits which were in the palace of Urbino. Like his reputed early tutor, Piero della Francesca, Melozzo had a great knowledge of perspective. The mathematician, Pacioli, mentions him in his *Summa di Arithmetica et Geometria*, published in 1494, during the master's lifetime, stating that in regard to his knowledge of perspective he was "one of the men famous and supreme." He displayed this knowledge in a remarkable manner in the cupola of SS. Apostoli and is one of the earliest to apply perspective to the human figure on a roof or a ceiling. His mastery in foreshortening has been equalled and surpassed long since by painters of every nationality, but, in his own day, it was a great novelty and was hailed as an innovator and a genius. Raphael's father, his friend, who was as a poet as well as a painter, has, for example, written of him:

. . . Melozzo, dear to me,
Who to perspective farther limits gave.

Forlì possesses but one work from Melozzo's hands, the "Pesta Pepe" (Pound the Pepper). It was originally painted for the signboard of a grocer's on an apothecary's shop, and shows a figure beating a heavy pestle

in a mortar. "Nowhere, perhaps, as in his renowned 'Apothecary's Apprentice Pounding Herbs' does painting show such embodiment of the joy in mere living, the play of muscles, and the use of limbs," wrote Berenson in praise of this picture. The two pictures in the National Gallery, London, "Rhetoric," and "Music," formerly ascribed to Justus of Ghent, now definitely ascribed to Melozzo, are graceful, smooth, and dignified, but they are not great paintings. The faces of the throned maidens he depicts in these works and the faces of the angels, now in the Vatican Gallery, show that he was capable of creating a noble, if slightly sensuous, type of youthful beauty. In the Uffizi there are two panels from an "Annunciation" — the Blessed Virgin and the Archangel Gabriel. The angel is a fine example of movement, the lines of the Mantegnesque drapery and the flying scarf emphasising swift action; the drapery of the Virgin is not so successfully conceived or executed. There is a record in a manuscript quoted in the *Commentary of the Life of Benozzo Gozzoli* that Melozzo da Forlì died on November 8, 1494, in his fifty-sixth year.

GIOVANNI SANTI (c. 1435-1494) was born in Castello di Colbordolo, a village on the mountain slopes of the Foglia valley, which was laid waste by Sigismondo Malatesta in 1446. He was the son of a dealer in corn, oil, and general wares, who removed his family to Urbino for safety and flourished so well that it is recorded he purchased, in 1461, "a fertile meadow with a stream of running water," and was able to purchase his own house in Urbino three years later. Giovanni was brought up in his father's business, for he tells us in one of his letters that "he was not bred to art," but having tried various ways of getting a livelihood and having failed, he studied painting and succeeded. When he was about forty, Giovanni married Maria Ciorla, the daughter of an Urbino tradesman. In his paternal home on the steep street at the corner of the market-place, known as the Contrada del Monte, now called the Contrada Raffaello, three children were born to them, of whom, only one, Raphael, survived infancy. Giovanni's wife died in October, 1491, and the following year he married again, his second wife being Bernardina, the daughter of Pietro di Parte, a jeweller of Urbino. But his life with his second wife was of short duration, for he died of malarial fever on August 1, 1494.

Such in a few words are the main facts of the life of this remarkable man, who, beginning life as a grocer's apprentice, became painter, man-of-letters, favourite at the court of the Montefeltro dukes, the friend of the greatest painters and litterateurs of his day, and the father of a genius. Giovanni Santi was probably induced to pursue the study of art by Melozzo da Forlì,

who worked in the ducal palace at Urbino from 1474 to 1476, decorating its library with frescoes of the arts and sciences. Most probably, too, he was influenced by Piero della Francesca, who lodged in his house when he came to Urbino to paint the portraits of the Duke and Duchess, of which we have already made mention. But the artist he most admired, and to whom he pays a striking tribute in his *Gesta Gloriose del Duca Federigo d'Urbino*, a chronicle in rhyme, was the Paduan, Andrea Mantegna, whose "Triumph" he had seen in Mantua when, in 1486, he had accompanied Duke Guidobaldo to visit the duke's bride to be, Elizabetta Gonzaga. Giovanni's long chronicle consists of 23,000 lines and is written after the manner of Dante's *Divina Commedia*. It is referred to here merely because it made a reputation as a poet for this artist, who executed altar-pieces in churches throughout Ancona, at Sinigaglia, Pesaro, Fano, Montefiorentino, and Urbino. Moreover it shows us what manner of man Raphael's father was, and gives us a glimpse of the moral and intellectual atmosphere in which Raphael grew to manhood.

Many of Santi's works are now destroyed. Probably the most important commission he ever undertook was the decoration of the Tiranni Chapel, in the old Church of S. Giovanni Battista, now S. Domenico, at Cagli, near Urbino. The best preserved of these frescoes is the "Madonna and Child with Saints and Angels," which occupies the lower part of the wall under a lunette of "The Resurrection." There is another "Madonna and Four Saints" in the Municipio of Gradara, near Pesaro; an "Annunciation" in the Brera Gallery in Milan; and his altar-piece of the ducal palace at Urbino showing our Blessed Lady with SS. John the Baptist, Sebastian, Jerome, and Francis.

Santi's style is simple and unaffected, he finished his pictures with care, but there is a chilliness about his colouring. He painted in a vehicle which was, strictly speaking, neither tempera nor oil, but a mixture of the two. His "Madonna and Child" in the National Gallery, London, is weak in tone and not vigorous in execution; the leaning pose of the Blessed Virgin and the similar pose of the Divine Child give an unpleasant effect. Giovanni Santi lead a quiet, pleasant life solely devoted to art and literature. A capable painter, though certainly not of the first rank; he was much sought after by the churches in his own locality. While visiting Mantua, in the summer of 1493, to paint a portrait of the famous Isabella d'Este—her portrait by Andrea Mantegna having failed to please her, he contracted the illness to which he eventually succumbed.

It is rather a curious fact that, although we possess today a far greater

number of specimens of the work of LUCA SIGNORELLI (c. 1441-1523), than of Piero della Francesca, Melozzo da Forlì, or Giovanni Santi, and although we have a considerable number of documents relating to his paintings, we know so little of the man himself. Only two of his works, his "Madonna" and "The Flagellation" now in the Brera, Milan, can definitely be said to have been painted before his thirty-third year. Indeed, we are not even certain as to the exact dates of his birth or his death. He was born at Cortona about 1441 of Egidio Signorelli, harness-maker, and of Bartolommea, a sister of Lazzaro di Taldi. This Lazzaro di Taldi, great-grandfather of Vasari (whose fame rests more securely on his undependable but always interesting biographies of the Italian artists than on his architectural designs or his paintings), had Luca placed as a pupil with Piero della Francesca. And we may remark *en passant* that it was Lazzaro's son, Giorgio, who, as an imitator of antique vases, won for the family the name of Vasari.

In 1479, being then in his thirty-eighth year, Signorelli was appointed to the municipal offices in Cortona, where, laden with honours, he spent most of his life. Before that year, he is believed to have spent some time in Florence under a master other than Piero della Francesca, probably Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, and to have painted the frescoes in the Church of the Holy House of Loreto, and those in Citta di Castello which were destroyed in 1798. Undoubtedly he was influenced by Antonio Pollaiuolo and Donatello, and followed the Florentine rather than the Umbrian masters and their methods.

We are more certain of events in Signorelli's life after his return to Cortona, but only those connected with his paintings call for mention here. In 1488 he was made an honorary citizen or freeman of the little town of Citta di Castello—an honour he greatly prized—for the great ability he displayed in painting a banner of the Blessed Virgin for its citizens. In Citta di Castello, too, he painted altar-pieces for the Churches of S. Agostino, in 1493, and S. Francesco in 1496. In 1497 he commenced his first great work at Monte Oliveto, near Siena, where he painted the frescoes of events in the life of S. Benedict. Later he proceeded to Orvieto and devoted himself to the frescoes of the last judgement, which are his noblest achievements. While at work upon, or after completing, his frescoes in the Cathedral of Orvieto and before beginning in Rome his frescoes for Julius II, later obliterated to make place for the works of Raphael and his pupils, Signorelli painted his altar-piece for the Church of S. Medardo, Arcevia, and other paintings which may still be seen, with those already mentioned, in the little Umbrian townships. Some of his works are to be found in Loreto,

Arezzo, Volterra, and Borgo San Sepolcro, while others are now the valued possessions of the galleries of Milan, Perugia, Florence, Paris, Berlin, London, and Dublin. But even as one must go to London — strange as it may seem — to study the work of the Venetian painter, Crivelli, so to see Signorelli at his best one must go to Cortona or to Orvieto.

Every critic of discernment who has written of Signorelli has paid tribute to his mastery over the nude and his triumphs in representing movement, and the tributes he has received are undoubtedly well deserved. Berenson hails him as "the greatest illustrator of the modern times," although "by no means the pleasantest," and we have frequently thought that this damping qualification can be aptly and easily illustrated by comparing the little boy-angel seated at the base of Signorelli's "Madonna Enthroned with Saints," in the Cathedral of Perugia, with the little boy-angel at the Blessed Virgin's feet in Gian Bellini's "Madonna Enthroned with Saints," in the Church of S. Zaccaria in Venice. In the Venetian's picture the boy-angel seems to be fit company for S. Lucy, S. Catherine of Alexandria, S. Jerome, and S. Peter, who stand to the right and left of the Madonna's throne; he is seated easily and naturally; the folds of his garments fall gracefully; the expression of his beautiful face is sweet and wistful, and if the viol on which he plays is too large, too much out of proportion, the hand that holds the viol's bow is delightfully drawn. But in Signorelli's painting, the boy-angel is so realistically conceived, he is so uncomfortably seated, his legs are so weak and skinny, and his body is so ungainly, that he is obviously a study from life — and not a pleasant one at that! — which should never have been given a place in a picture of our Blessed Lord and His Virgin Mother, if the picture was painted for the purpose of inspiring devotion. In this picture, too, Signorelli's S. Onofrio, who stands at our Lady's right hand, is just a dirty, sun-browned, half-starved beggar, thin and scraggy, with rheumatic joints, uncombed hair, and receding forehead, probably picked up in the streets of Cortona to pose for Signorelli, who has drawn with a realism that is almost revolting.

Two other pictures of his occur to us, as we write, which are marred by attempts to display his great anatomical knowledge, of which he was inordinately proud. They are his "Crucifixion" in Borgo San Sepolcro and his "Magdalene at the Foot of the Cross," now in the Accademia, Florence. In the first of these the body of our Lord is coarsely conceived and is one of Signorelli's poorest figures. We get the impression that he has in painting the limbs of the dead Christ shown exaggerated tibial curves, or in other words, made our Divine Redeemer — what would be vulgarly called — "bow-

legged," and that his figure has been painted merely as a study of muscle. In the second the body of our Lord is more graceful and more devotional, but the arm, shoulder, and torso muscles have been overemphasised. Strength always attracted Signorelli: his angels have wings strong enough to bear them from earth to heaven; his soldiers are not mere swaggerers, they have the strength to kill; many of his types are audacious, self-reliant, and even brutal. His mastery of the delineation of the nude form was complete, not one of his predecessors or contemporaries, not even Antonio Pollaiuolo, could equal him in vitality of movement. He seemed to revel in complicated actions of the body, whose mechanism he had so assiduously studied, and in this was equalled only by Michelangelo, whose immediate predecessor he was in this class of study. Although he equalled, and at times surpassed, Ghirlandaio in the grandeur of his conceptions, he was frequently more coarse in the selection of individual forms. All these characteristics are to be found in the work by which he gained timeless renown and stands out as one of the greatest fresco painters of the fifteenth century, his Orvieto frescoes.

The Cathedral of Orvieto is one of the most beautiful Gothic churches in Italy. It was begun in 1285 and its interior walls are built of travertine marble and basalt. The choir is decorated with frescoes of the life of the Blessed Virgin by Ugolino di Prete Ilario, Pietro di Puccio, and Antonio di Viterbro. The chapel on the right—in those days called the Cappella Nuova, but dedicated since the seventeenth century to the Madonna di San Brizio, on account of a Byzantine picture of our Lady—was decorated by Fra Angelico. It was during the hectic period which elapsed between the death of Pope Eugenius IV, and the election of Nicholas V, that the frescoes were begun by the great Dominican painter, who was engaged by the Chapter of the cathedral to paint the "Last Judgement." The Chapter was held on May 11, 1447, and their deliberations, still preserved in the archives of the cathedral, are worded: "Considering that the chapel facing the one of the Corporal is blank . . . it would be fitting to have it painted by some good and famous master painter. At this moment there is at Orvieto a religious of the observance of S. Dominic, who has painted and is painting the chapel of our most Holy Father in the Palace of the Vatican, who might perhaps be persuaded to come and paint the chapel; *he is the most famous of all the painters of Italy*, and would paint in the church only three months in the year, that is, in June, July, and August, because during the other months he is obliged to serve the Holy Father; but in these three months he will not remain in Rome. He asks a salary for himself at the rate of 200

ducats of gold a year, with the expense of food, and colours, scaffolding, etc., and *this master painter is Fra Giovanni.*"

Fra Angelico, with the assistance of his pupil, Benozzo Gozzoli, decorated three divisions of the ceiling, and in these he represented our Divine Lord surrounded by a glory of angels and giving judgement (the attitude is supposed to have been copied afterwards by Michelangelo), sixteen figures of saints and Apostles seated in clouds, and the Blessed Virgin amongst the Apostles. But he was obliged to leave the balance unfinished when summoned back to Rome by Nicholas V. No satisfactory explanation has been found for the failure of Fra Angelico to return to Orvieto to complete his frescoes. The Chapter waited for him, refusing many masters the commission to finish his work, until that last moment when "envious Death dashed from him his brush," thus rendering hope of his return impossible.

Benozzo Gozzoli, we read, begged permission to carry on the work of Fra Angelico, but the Chapter of the cathedral would not grant it. More than half a century passed before—after some futile negotiations with Perugino—the authorities decided, in 1499, to place the completion of the decoration of the chapel in the hands of Signorelli. They wished, however, to test his powers and would only permit him to decorate the vaulting. It was not till the following year that—being highly pleased with his work—they instructed him to proceed to decorate the walls of the chapel with the story of "The Last Judgement."

It would be beyond the scope of this book to attempt to deal in detail with Signorelli's works at Orvieto: his "Preaching and Fall of Anti-Christ," "The Resurrection of the Dead," "Heaven," "Hell," "The Signs of Destruction," or his grisaille paintings, which have made Orvieto a place of pilgrimage for artists and art lovers of every nationality and of every generation since their completion. They cannot adequately be described; they must be examined and studied to be properly appreciated. The figures are, generally speaking, broadly and vigorously conceived and treated in the master's boldest manner, many are well and some exquisitely modelled and expertly posed. His technique is strong and vigorous, his draperies are treated with simplicity and breadth of fold. Each fresco tells its story vividly, startlingly, dramatically. In the "Anti-Christ" we remember the sinister and saturnine faces of the groups, the terrible force of the angel with its relentless swoop, and the unresisting fall of the heavy body through the air. In "The Damnation" we remember the convulsed, writhing, frenzied mass of men, women, and devils that seemed to be alive and stark mad with horror and suffering, all so vividly portrayed that we seem to hear the screams of the damned as

the devils — painted in all colours: slate-blues, heavy greens, livid mauves and purples — strangle them or tear their throats or claw at them in malignant fury. The representations of hell by Fra Angelico, Botticelli, and even by painstaking Albrecht Dürer are merely grotesque, when compared with the awful realism of Signorelli's appalling conceptions of the torments of these human beings made in the image and likeness of God and now lost to Him forever.

The chief qualities of Signorelli's work are consistency, repetition of his own finished types, mastery of the human structure and its movements, clear line, nearly always structurally accurate, and the plastic quality of his modelling. Like all human beings Signorelli had his faults and as an artist his defects; for example, he was careless. He was careless when his value of distance is faulty, when one of his figures gives the impression that it is standing upon, instead of behind, another — due only to carelessness — for there was no greater master of aerial perspective than the painter of the Orvieto frescoes. Sometimes, in an effort to conceive massed figures, he pays not enough attention to the drawing of hands and feet; some of his conceptions are badly balanced; in his choice of colours and their distribution he leaves much to be desired; and whatever element of beauty is found in his works is not the kind of beauty we usually associate with feminine charm and grace or elegance, rather is it the masculine type of beauty glorying in strength, vitality, and power. No painter before him has so ennobled the human form, or conceived man and woman with the same stately grandeur, or endowed them with more robust strength and mental vigour.

Signorelli, it is interesting to note, was the first artist who ever painted anyone wearing spectacles.

CHAPTER TEN

THE GREATEST UMBRIAN OF THEM ALL

Raphael Santi

RAPHAEL (1483-1520), who by common consent has been acclaimed one of the greatest painters the world has ever known and whose supremacy remains undisputed to this day, was born in Urbino on April 6, 1483. He was the son of Giovanni Santi or Sanzio, an excellent draughtsman and a good if not a great painter, attached to the court of the Montefeltro dukes at Urbino.

At the time of Raphael's birth, Urbino, thanks to its highly cultured rulers, Duke Frederick II and his son Guidobaldo, who succeeded him in 1482, had become one of the most prominent art centers of Italy. The Duke Frederick, a cultured and enlightened lover of art, had engaged in his service Piero della Francesca, Melozzo da Forli, Justus of Ghent, and other celebrated artists then rapidly winning wide renown. The rich treasures which the ducal palace contained, familiar to Raphael from boyhood, helped to foster his early love of art and to form the serene and pure moral atmosphere which is so characteristic of his genius.

Anxious that Raphael should follow in his own footsteps as a painter, Giovanni Santi gave him his first lessons in painting. However, Santi's part in Raphael's formation is very negligible because he died in 1492, when the boy was only eleven years old. As Raphael's mother had died three years before his father, the orphan was now adopted by a maternal uncle, Simone de Battista de Ciarla, who must have been very good to him, for even in his last years Raphael addresses him in his letters with the words, "Dear to me as a father."

This relative apprenticed him to a painter of some distinction then living in Urbino, Timoteo Viti, a pupil of the celebrated Francesco Francia, the greatest master of the School of Bologna. In Timoteo's studio and under his influence, Raphael painted the earliest of his pictures that have been pre-

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served. Of these his "S. George and S. Michael," in the Louvre, and his little canvas, "The Vision of the Knight," in the National Gallery, London, are well known. This latter picture is remarkable for the fact that, although it was painted under the influence of Raphael's first master, it resembles the work of his second master, Perugino, in the design and attitudes of the sleeping knight attended by two allegorical female figures. Especially is this true of the maiden on the right who offers the tired warrior flowers, symbolical of the sensual enjoyments of life, and of the maiden on the left, robed in purple and violet, who offers him a book and a sword, symbolical of knowledge and conflict. This is further evident in the slender tree—not unlike the trees in Perugino's fresco of "The Crucifixion," in the Church of S. Mary Magdalene, in Florence—which rises in the middle of the picture, and in the rugged and rocky landscape which slopes up to a castellated eminence and forms an interesting background.

According to Vasari, Perugino was the first master of Raphael, but this is no longer credited, because Morelli conclusively proved the close resemblance of style in the works of Timoteo and of his illustrious pupil. It is now generally accepted that his association with Perugino began when the great Umbrian master was engaged on his frescoes of religious and classical subjects in the Sala del Cambio, or Banker's Exchange, at Perugia. Raphael remained in Perugino's studio for four years, actively assisting his master in preparing grounds, tracing his drawings, and making transfers. He also made copies of the works of Mantegna, Pinturicchio, Signorelli, da Vinci, and Pollaiuolo, and many original studies and ambitious compositions.

To this period belong his "Madonna of the Rock," his "Madonna between S. Jerome and S. Francis," his "Crucifixion," painted in 1502, and "The Coronation of the Virgin," painted in 1503 for the Franciscans of Perugia. But Raphael's greatest work of this period is his "Espousal of the Virgin," painted in 1504 and now preserved in Milan. This picture was executed for the Church of S. Francis at Citta del Castello, from which it was stolen by the French general, Lecchi, in 1798. It was sold by him to a citizen of Milan for a paltry sum, from whom the city authorities purchased it in 1804, for some two thousand guineas. "Lo Sposalizio," as it is known in Italian, shows that Raphael has already surpassed Perugino's style and sense of beauty. The figures evidence Raphael's great skill in full and natural grouping, and the imposing and finely proportioned temple that forms the background attests his complete mastery of perspective. In regard to its composition, the picture is almost an adaptation of "The Delivery of the Keys," Perugino's monumental fresco in the Sistine Chapel.

The story of Raphael's visit to Siena and the assistance he is said to have given Pinturicchio with the latter's designs for the library at Siena is now regarded as the pure invention of Siennese municipal vanity. After a brief summer visit to Urbino, and armed with a letter of introduction from the Duchess Giovanna della Rovere to the Gonfalonier of Justice, Piero Soderini, Raphael set out for Florence—set out on the journey that was eventually to lead him to Rome and to imperishable fame. He was twenty-one.

The four years Raphael spent in Florence (1504-08) were lived in an atmosphere stimulated by never-ending contest with men who were his masters, but whose achievements he was determined to equal if not surpass. Many Umbrian painters whom Raphael had known personally, or by their works, had preceded him to the city of the Arno: Piero della Francesca, his father's friend; Luca Signorelli, who had been in Urbino before Giovanni Santi's death; Perugino, his own master; and many others who had left the Umbrian hill-towns to attain proficiency in their art in Florence. "The city and the works it contained both seemed to him to be divine," for the earlier generations of Florentine artists had filled the churches and convents, the palaces and public squares with works of singular beauty, contact with which at first surprised Raphael and later prompted him to decide to begin his education over again.

In Florence Raphael met Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Bartolommeo della Porta, better known as Fra Bartolommeo, and Andrea del Sarto. In Florence he studied the works of Masaccio, Filippo Lippi, Botticelli, Donatello, and other great masters so conscientiously that the masterpieces of each painter seemed to give a fresh impetus to his own art. When Michelangelo told Condivi, in apparent disparagement of the young Umbrian, that Raphael of Urbino owed less to nature than to study, he said what was perfectly true. But Raphael seemed to possess the power of assimilating every scrap of knowledge he acquired and every impression he received. He studied not only the technique and method of the masters he found in Florence, but he read philosophy, history, architecture, archaeology, as though he had not a moment to lose, as though he was preparing himself for the carrying out of some vast undertaking which he might, at any moment, be called upon to perform. Of all the works of the dead or living Florentine masters which he studied, Raphael was most impressed by those of Masaccio in the Carmine. His grand grouping of figures and his well-nigh perfect treatment of the human form revealed to Raphael the extent of his own powers in a similar direction and became an incentive to him to outdo all that Masaccio had accomplished.

A list of Raphael's work during his four years in Florence is as lengthy as it is noteworthy, but cannot be complete in this brief essay. Briefly it may be said that in addition to his "Madonna del Gran Duca," painted within a year of his arrival in Florence, we owe to this intense period of his development the "Madonna del Cardellino," "Madonna della Cassa Tempi," "Madonna degli Ansidei," "La Belle Jardinière," "Madonna di S. Antonio," "Madonna del Baldacchino," "Madonna Canigiani," "The Three Graces," "S. Catherine of Alexandria," "S. Francis and S. Anthony of Padua," "The Entombment," and to conclude, the portrait of Duke Guidobaldo, as well as the artist's fine portrait of himself, now in the *Uffizi*.

"Quite the loveliest Raphael in the world," was Ruskin's verdict on the "Madonna degli Ansidei," after one of his last visits to the National Gallery. And even those who disagree with this opinion will admit that in this masterpiece of his early years Raphael's growing individuality is distinctly visible. Umbrian in spirit, it shows a tenderness of feeling and an element of ideality refined and strengthened by Florentine discipline. Painted for the Ansidei family of Perugia, for the chapel in the Servite Church of S. Fiorenzo, it remained there till 1764 when it was purchased and presented to the then Duke of Marlborough. At the Blenheim sale in 1885, it was purchased for the National Gallery for the sum of £70,000, which would not be regarded as a sensational price to-day, but was, at that time, three times greater than had ever previously been paid for a single picture. Raphael painted greater pictures than this Madonna; his mastery of form and the strength and vigour of his draughtsmanship improved; but it is questionable if he ever painted cool grey marble against a light blue sky so effectively, or ever got such rhythmic lines into the heads of the Madonna, the Child, and the supporting saints. His "Madonna di San Sisto" is more vital and stimulating, more majestic and awe-inspiring—men and women of to-day frequently back out tiptoe from the room in which it is exhibited, as though from the regal presence of some great living personage—and yet there is not in this, the last picture of the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son painted by the hand of Raphael, the same spirit of serene repose, calm, and holy peace as in his "Ansidei Madonna."

Those who are fortunate enough to be able to stand before this picture in London, or his "Madonna di Foligno" in the Vatican, his "La Belle Jardinière," or his "Archangel Michael" in the Louvre, or before his "Madonna del Gran Duca," or his "Vision of Ezechiel" in the Pitti Gallery, or before his "Madonna del Cardellino" in the *Uffizi*, will readily agree with the great French artist who said: "Two men seem to have had a glimpse into heaven,

so marvellously do they paint the inhabitants of heaven. One of these is Raphael the Italian, the other Murillo the Spaniard, and of these two by far the greater is Raphael." Some forty Madonnas are attributed to Raphael and, in each and every one of them, all that is sweetest, noblest, and purest in happy maternity and child-like innocence is brought forth so feelingly and tenderly and with such perfect artistry that on this work of his Florentine period alone an incontestable claim could be made for a high place for him in the history of Italian art.

Born in Urbino, Raphael inherited from Giovanni Santi, his father, refined tastes, will power, and strength of character. His boyhood was spent in the pure and wholesome society of a cultured court, and only in such an atmosphere, only in such serene surroundings, was he ever happy throughout the rest of his life. In Urbino he learnt the rudiments of painting and loyalty to the great traditions of the past from his first master, Timoteo Viti. And there he painted the first of his pictures that have come down to us.

In Perugia he began a second apprenticeship under Perugino, and while he never lost the grace and sincerity of the style of his first master, he learnt to imitate his new master's manner so closely in every particular that it was impossible to distinguish the works of the young Urbinate from those of the mature Umbrian. He learnt the sense of air and space, learnt to paint distant hills, far horizons, and clear skies, which give to his Umbrian pictures their serene atmosphere of repose and peace. In Perugia he studied the works of the earlier painters and, although he became susceptible to the influences of, and learnt something from each one of them, he developed so intelligently that he became the exclusive follower of not even the greatest of them. And there he painted the first pictures in which he definitely excelled his masters.

In Florence, in his third period, Raphael, "counting it still the greatest joy in life to learn," studied even more diligently, taking for his models the finest example of the revived classical style then extant—Masaccio's Brancacci Chapel frescoes—and acquiring the broad and vigorous style and manner of execution of Fra Bartolommeo. He developed his love of the beautiful, made himself proficient in the pyramidal form of composition. In Florence his genius began to flower, and he started to draw men, women, and children, not as they actually were, but as he considered they ought to be. A quality of genius is its transcendency: genius transfigures the real, sublimating it into the ideal, the divine, the eternal. Charles Lamb well remarks that the great masters of painting "got at their true conclusions by *not* showing the actual appearance, that is all that was to be seen at any given moment by an indifferent eye, but only what the eye might be sup-

posed to see in the doing or suffering of some portentous action." Raphael had now learnt all that Florence could teach him; his studies and experiments were over; his periods of preparation had run their course; the currents of Ferrarese, Umbrian, and Florentine painting were blended together in his art; he had reached the heights of the foremost masters of his day; he now required an opportunity to display his art majestically and finally. This opportunity was given to him, when he was summoned from Florence to Rome by Pope Julius II to undertake the great work of the Vatican frescoes.

When Raphael arrived in the Eternal City, many of the great works inaugurated by Julius II were already in progress. The Pontiff had taken into his service Donato Lazzari of Urbino, surnamed Bramante, the great architect of the age, and Michelangelo Buonarroti of Florence, the greatest sculptor; and, as he was determined to secure the services of the greatest painter, and probably acting on advice he received from Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino, he summoned Raphael to Rome to join the other artists in his employment. Among these were the Umbrians, Perugino, Pinturicchio, and Signorelli; the Sienese, Baldassare, and Peruzzi; the Lombard, Sodoma; and the Venetian, Lorenzo Lotto. While Perugino was painting the ceiling of the Stanza dell' Incendio, and Peruzzi was engaged in the Stanza d'Eliodoro, Sodoma, one of the most gifted of Leonardo da Vinci's pupils, became Raphael's assistant when he was instructed to begin the decoration of the Camera della Segnatura, one of the Stanze of the Vatican.

The Stanze of Raphael consists of a large salon with four smaller halls built by Pope Nicholas V, corresponding to the four Borgia chambers which are immediately below them. In the year 1507 Julius II, annoyed at being constantly reminded of Alexander VI, gave up the Borgia apartment and decided to inhabit the suite of rooms now known as Raphael's Stanze. These rooms had already been partly decorated by painters of distinctions including Andrea del Castagno, Piero della Francesca, Benedetto Bonfigli, Perugino, and others. Sodoma was then at work on the ceiling of the Camera della Segnatura, so named from the signing of pardons—Segnatura di Grazia—the granting of which was discussed here in the presence of the pope. Sodoma was dismissed by Julius who handed over to Raphael the completion of the ceiling. He achieved it with four medallions representing the moral powers—theology, philosophy, poetry, and justice. He painted also four corner panels related to the medallions: with theology, "The Fall of Man"; with poetry, "The Punishment of Marsyas"; with philosophy, "The Study of the Globe"; and with Justice, "The Judgement of Solomon." The coun-

tenance of the figure representing poetry expresses serene and sweet inspiration; *Numine Afflatur*, "inspired by the gods," are the words inscribed on the tablets of the winged genii. Philosophy holds two volumes, one concerning morality, the other the study of external phenomena; *Causarum cognitio*, "the knowledge of causes," are the words on the tablets. Theology, austere and chaste, holds the Gospels and points with her finger to the Trinity below; the tablets carried by the genii bear the words *Divinarum rerum notitia*, "the knowledge of things Divine."

The pope was so much enchanted with the work, that he assigned to Raphael the task of decorating the walls of the four rooms with frescoes; and Raphael began the execution of the large historical and symbolical compositions that embrace the whole of human knowledge. In these we can trace the different stages of development in the great painter's genius. In the Stanza della Segnatura, on which Raphael worked between 1508 and 1511, each of the four moral paintings is an illustration of the subject presented by the symbolical figure on the ceiling. In the Stanza d'Eliodoro, in which he worked between 1512 and 1514, the mural paintings refer to the divine assistance granted to the Church against her foes, and to the miraculous corroboration of her doctrines. In the Stanza dell' Incendio, painted in 1517, the subjects of the walls tell the story of the acts of Leo X, the successor of Julius II. In the Sala di Constantino, painted after 1520, the scenes are from the life of Constantine and depict the Emperor as the champion of the Church and the founder of her temporal power—in one scene we see Constantine's donation of "the city of Rome" to Pope Sylvester I.

Raphael's "Disputa" in the Stanza della Segnatura is divided into two principal parts: the upper part represents the glory of heaven, the Church Triumphant; the lower part represents the Church Militant, an ideal assembly of all the Church dignitaries on earth who took part in the various controversies on the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Above, in the centre, is our Blessed Lord enthroned and attended by His Virgin Mother and by His Precursor, S. John the Baptist; over our Lord appears the half-figure of God the Father in the act of benediction, and below Him gleams the dove, the symbol of the Holy Ghost in the midst of angels bearing the books of the Evangelists. On each side of Christ and enthroned in a semicircle below Him, are Apostles, patriarchs, and saints; from left to right one sees S. Peter, Adam, S. John the Evangelist, David and S. Lawrence; then S. George, S. Stephen, Moses, S. James, Abraham, and S. Paul. Below, in the centre, is a rich altar on which the Sacred Host, the pictured symbol of the real bodily presence of the Saviour on earth, is exposed. To the right and

left of the altar are the great defenders of the faith, popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, poets, and others, discussing or studying in books the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament. The Four Fathers of the Latin Church are seated on either side of the altar: on the left is S. Gregory the Great; near him is S. Jerome, holding the Scriptures and sunk in dogmatic meditations; on his left stands S. Bernard, who with extended arms points towards the Sacred Host. On the right of the altar is S. Ambrose, the great Bishop of Milan, who with uplifted eyes and an expression of ecstasy appears to be lost in adoration of the mystery of the Holy Trinity; near him is S. Augustine, with his book closed, dictating to a neophyte. Before S. Ambrose stands Peter Lombard, the master of the sentences, with his finger pointing up to the Holy Ghost; next to him is Dun Scotus, the subtle scholastic. Behind S. Augustine is the great S. Thomas Aquinas, the protagonist of the Dominicans, Pope Innocent III, and the seraphic S. Bonaventura writing his *Defences* of the Council of Lyons. The Pontiff standing on the first step represents Sixtus IV, behind whom are various poets and philosophers—Dante, who would not hesitate to condemn a pope to hell; and Savonarola, the reforming Dominican, who was burned in the reign of the Borgia pope, and venerated as a saint by Raphael and his Florentine friends. Many other disputers and seekers after truth are grouped on the left of the great composition, among whom are Fra Angelico and Berengarius, Archdeacon of Angers, leaning on the balustrade and holding an open book, who turns his head to argue fiercely with a youth pointing to the altar. The two mitred bishops are believed to be portraits of Raphael himself and his master Perugino.

The mingled variety and balanced symmetry of this composition, the harmonious and unifying grouping of so many figures, of such divergent types, the serene quietude of the spacious sky and spreading landscape, all combine to make the "Disputa" one of the noblest examples of monumental painting in the world. Raphael was guided in choosing his saints and theologians for this great fresco by his friends, Cardinals Bembo and Bibbiena.

His "School of Athens" forms a pendant to the "Disputa" opposite and represents an imaginary assembly of all the philosophers of Asia and Greece and their scholars. Here Raphael has done away with the intervals of time and space, which separate so many illustrious men, and presents them to us as contemporaries. In a lofty and spacious hall, conceived architecturally in the imposing style of Bramante, with colossal statues of Apollo and Minerva on either side, the greatest minds of all ages and climes are brought together. A flight of four steps raises the more distant figures above the nearer groups.



MADONNA DI FOLIGNO

Raphael



DISPUTA DEL SACRAMENTO

Raphael



THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS

Raphael

Among the former, Plato and Aristotle, the princes in the realm of thought, stand together in the centre, as if disputing on their doctrines. Plato holds the *Timæus* in one hand and with the other points to heaven — an attitude significant of his system of speculative philosophy; while Aristotle, holds the *Ethics*, and with a calm gesture indicates the earth — thereby implying that at all time philosophy must be derived from investigation and experience. On each side of these mighty ones is shown a row of attentive auditors. To the left is seen Socrates in argument with a group of five persons, to whom he explains, while on the opposite side others are engaged in conversation or in study. Lying upon the steps in front is Diogenes the cynic, apparently unaware of the crowds around him; in the foreground to the left is the bald-headed Pythagoras, busily writing upon his knee; and behind him is Empedocles. The youth in the white mantle is a portrait of Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino and a nephew of Julius II; the figure resting his foot on a marble block is said to be Anaxagoras; and the man supporting his head with his left hand is believed to be Heraclitus. In the group to the right is seen Archimedes — a portrait of Bramante — stooping and drawing a diagram with a compass, while several pupils watch him with interest and intelligence; behind them are Zoroaster — a portrait of Castiglione — and Ptolemy, holding celestial and terrestrial globes, both are turned towards two figures which are portraits of Raphael and Sodoma.

No previously painted fresco can be compared to the "School of Athens" for the varied arrangement and natural pose of the figures. This name by which it is now generally known was invented and bestowed on it by a French traveller of the seventeenth century, but the triumph of human reason as contrasted with the mysteries of the Christian faith is the true subject of the composition. We have examined with the naked eye and with glasses the fifty odd figures in this wonderful fresco and, suffering though it is from time and cleaning, in the drawing and modelling of each form, in the meaning and significance of each gesture, and in the solemnity and majestic dignity of the whole, we realise the consummate artistry Raphael displayed in this mighty work.

The two remaining walls which Raphael had to paint were broken by large windows, and the successful completion of this task required all his ingenuity, but he rose to the occasion. In the space above the window looking into the Belvedere Court he painted the "Mount of Parnassus," the glorification of poetical life and exalted sentiment. In the centre of the picture, Apollo is seen seated under some laurel trees playing a violin — this instrument is said to have been chosen by Raphael out of compliment to

his great friend, Giacoma Gausecondo, the famous violinist. The muse sitting on the right of Apollo is Calliope, who holds on her knee the trumpet of fame; the face of Calliope is said to be that of Michelangelo's friend, the celebrated poetess, Vittoria Colonna. Behind Calliope are Melpomene with the mask of tragedy, and Terpsichore and Polyhymnia embracing each other; Erato sits on the left of Apollo, and behind her are Clio, Thalia, Euterpe, and Urania. To the right and left of Apollo and the Nine Muses are to be seen the great poets of antiquity and modern Italy.

In the group to the left is the imposing figure of blind Homer with upturned face reciting verse, which a seated youth listens to and writes down on the tablets on his knee. Behind Homer are Dante and Virgil, below are the lyric poets: Alcaeus, Corinna of Thebes, Petrarch, and Anacreon, engaged in conversation with Sappho, who is seated holding a scroll on which her name is inscribed.

In the group to the right of the window, Pindar is seated, speaking with enthusiasm, while Horace and another poet, probably Ovid, listen to him with reverence; behind them is Sannazzaro, who wrote the *Arcadia*, and, higher up, Boccaccio and Terence, Ariosto and Aristophanes may be seen. The entire composition, notwithstanding the unfavourable character of the space to be filled, is symmetrically, though freely and pleasingly, arranged, but the idyllic conception is somewhat marred by the cramped conditions under which the artist was compelled to work.

Lack of space presents further mention of Raphael's work in the Camera della Segnatura or the other halls of the Vatican. The magnitude of the task he assayed, and the erudition he displayed in performing it were unprecedented. "The knowledge expressed in these frescoes is so thorough," Symonds wrote, "that we wonder whether in his body lived again the soul of some accomplished sage. . . . If, after estimating the range of thought revealed in these works, we next consider the labour of the mind involved in the distribution of so many multitudes of beautiful and august human figures, in the modelling of their drapery, the study of their expression, and their grouping into balanced compositions, we may form some notion of the magnitude of Raphael's performance."

The year 1514 was a memorable one in the life of Raphael, for in that year he finished the frescoes of the Stanza d'Eliodoro—in which he left one of the most remarkable pictures extant for contrasting effects of light, "The Liberation of S. Peter from Prison"—and was appointed architect of S. Peter's on the death of Bramante, by the successor of Julius, Pope Leo X. During part of the years between 1514 and 1518, he was engaged in the

decoration of the Chigi Chapel, for his patron, in the Church of S. Maria della Pace. To these years we owe his portraits of "Leo X," "A Young Man," "Count Baldassare Castiglione," "Joanna of Aragon," "Le Violiniste," and "Cardinal Bibbiena," which are as full of nature and uncompromising realism as the best of Titian's or Holbein's portraits. They have, moreover, that vitality which for all their charm his early portraits of Angelo Doni, Maddalena Strozzi, his wife, and the "La Donna Gravida," in the Pitti Gallery, lack. The great and outstanding work of Raphael's last years were his cartoons for the Sistine Chapel tapestries, his "S. Cecilia," "The Archangel Michael," "The Visitation," "Madonna di San Sisto" and "The Transfiguration," on which he was at work when he took malaria fever from which he died, on his birthday, April 6, 1520. He left a thousand ducats to endow a sepulchral chapel; three hundred ducats to each of his servants; and his unfinished pictures and drawings to his scholars, Giulio Romano and Francesco Penni.

The reputation of Raphael, like that of many another genius, has suffered not only from the calumny of enemies and from the flattery of sycophants, but especially from those who — never having visited the great European galleries, or kept abreast of the discoveries of modern scientific criticism — continue to paraphrase the so-called art criticisms of writers probably as badly informed as they are themselves. Raphael is, by such writers, given unnecessary credit for work he never accomplished, or he is robbed of the honour due him for work well and nobly done. For example, some critics argue that he could not possibly have had time to do the work generally allotted to his Roman period, and others contend that he did all this and more. By some critics he is hailed as a superman, gifted to an extraordinary degree with an education so liberal that he might have put to shame the most brilliant philosophers, scientists, theologians, and litterateurs of the Papal Court, and by other writers he is branded a mere ignoramus, but one who was — fortunately for himself — able to draw. To be more specific, Raphael is accused of being intellectually unable to conceive the work Pope Julius called upon him to perform, and consequently to have had to obtain the assistance of Bembo, Bibbiena, and Castiglione. The claim is made that the greater part of the works of his twelve years in Rome were executed by his pupils: Giulio Romano, Pierino del Vaga, Giovanni da Undine, and Francesco Penni. Lastly, he is said to have copied his Vatican frescoes, including his world-renowned "Disputa," and "The School of Athens," from similar works of older artists, notably from "The Triumph of S. Thomas," by Filippino Lippi and from "Glory of S. Thomas" by Benozzo Gozzoli. That

Raphael had access to the book of Diogenes Laertius, the favourite authority in the sixteenth century on the ancient philosophers, also to the poems of Boethius, the "Triumphs" of Petrarch and the works of Dante, which were mines of intellectual wealth for the artist as well as the litterateur, and from which, being able to read, he might have obtained many of his ideas, are facts which are glossed over by Raphael's detractors.

We wish to say here quite bluntly and frankly that a great deal of unnecessary claptrap has been written about Raphael. In a recently published examination of his work, the author pretends to make the momentous discovery that it was the sudden realisation by Raphael, after he left Florence, of his ability to adapt the classical style to his own requirements that enabled him to conceive and execute the great work of his Roman period. This is sheer nonsense. Then we have been told over and over again that there is perhaps no more striking phenomenon in all the history of art than the sudden transformation of the youthful Raphael of Perugia and Florence, of Raphael the pupil of Viti and Perugino, into Raphael the mighty master of the Vatican frescoes, who so finally interpreted the noblest aspirations of mankind for his own and all succeeding ages. We have neither the time nor the inclination to set forth the reasons advanced by such writers in their attempts to explain away this unprecedented metamorphosis; suffice it to say that we believe no such sudden transformation, no such miraculous change ever took place. We believe Raphael could and would, as he grew older and as his genius expanded, have conceived and carried out, in Florence or elsewhere, work just as great, as noble, as inspired, and as majestic, as that which he left behind him in Rome, for the simple reason that Raphael was, if ever there was one, a man of genius. It just so happened that in Rome and not in Florence the Church provided him with the opportunity of bequeathing his masterpieces to mankind—the vast undertaking he had spent his youth preparing himself to perform.

Men of genius have been rightly described as men of spirit, as men of enormous energy, and beings possessed of wondrous creative insight and revealing power. Raphael was such a man. His energy was certainly enormous. We clearly remember thinking—when we stood for the first time in the Camera della Segnatura in reverent awe before the "Disputa," one of the few paintings in the world that bears the imprint of theological majesty—that the composition and execution of this one painting of the Church Militant and Triumphant joining in humble adoration of the Blessed Eucharist, might easily have occupied many years of the life of any painter who, lacking Raphael's fervent faith, spiritual ardour, and unquestioned ac-

accomplishments, would in the end have failed to reveal the essential, simply by omitting the nonessential and subordinating details. It was only then that we began dimly to realise that the twelve crowded years of Raphael's life in Rome are unparalleled for sheer achievement, because in that comparatively short space of time he conceived and completed the Stanze of the Vatican, the "Acts of the Apostles," the Farnesina, the Loggie, and some fifty pictures and portraits, and at the same time was able to give attention to his architectural, archaeological, tapestry designing, and other undertakings.

Raphael was a genius for many other reasons, not the least of which is the continuous high-level, balance, and suavity of his Roman work. In this, his final and perfect period, his energy was sustained, not spasmodic; it was intense, not turbulent or violent; it concerned itself with essentials, not accessories; and it was creative, assimilative, and regenerative. He was a genius because he possessed the power of making us lose ourselves, forget about ourselves, and forget about him, in our contemplation of his work.

Those who have had the privilege of standing before his last great masterpiece, "The Transfiguration," in the Vatican Gallery—the picture which was placed at the head of his corpse during his lying-in-state—will, we think, admit that he has the ability to render us unconscious of any medium between us and the double subject he presents. He makes us become not merely a chance spectator of the scene in which a number of distracted people bring a possessed boy to the disciples of our Lord, but he makes us one with and one of the characters taking part in the event he so vividly depicts. Raphael has, admittedly, been criticised for the double subject of "The Transfiguration," and for what has wrongfully been described as a lack of connexion between the lower and the upper portions of the painting. Goethe's defence of Raphael should be more widely known and should be well considered by future critics of this picture. "It is marvellous," wrote Goethe, "that any one should ever have ventured to criticise the great unity of such a conception. In the Saviour's absence, some unhappy parents bring a demoniac boy to the disciples of the Lord: they may have already attempted to cast out the evil spirit; a book even has been opened, to enquire if any traditional form can be found effective against the evil possessions; but in vain. At this moment the only Mighty One appears, and this in a glorified state, acknowledged by his great Father. At once they point to such a vision as to the one source of safety. How can one desire to separate the two parts? Both are one: below, the suffering, the needy; above, the Able, the Helper: both related to each other, both linked together. And, to express

our meaning in another manner, can an ideal reference to the actual interfere with this? Raphael was even distinguished for the correctness of his mode of thinking; and shall the God-inspiring man, whom we throughout recognise as such, have thought, have acted falsely, in the very prime of his life? Nay; like nature, he is at all times right and just; there, most profoundly so, where we least understood her."

Raphael was a genius for another important reason—he can make us conscious of and, like Shakespeare, express for us those formless ideas and mute feelings that were lying, unknown to us, unborn in our hearts; he can make us realise raptures and delights we had never known were in us, and appreciate aspects and truths of life and beauty we had scarcely noticed before. For example, who can stand unmoved before the "Madonna degli Ansdei"? Men of every nationality and every creed have found in their hearts an exaltation beyond their power to express, an exaltation beyond language, as their own eyes followed the love-filled eyes of S. John turned to the immaculate mother of his Saviour. Raphael was a genius because in the majority of his works, and certainly in the greatest of his works, he strove to reach sublime heights, by attempting to portray almighty God, who, being infinite and eternal, is the grandest subject of the sublime, for us whether as the Man-God of "The Transfiguration" or as the Divine Child in his numerous Madonna paintings. And, lastly, Raphael was a genius because he dealt—we might say almost throughout his entire career—only with what was, and what still remains, significant. He did not attempt to break new ground, to sweep away old traditions, or to make way for new types of his own, he sought no new subjects. He was a great, normal, devout artist, and as such left to eccentric men of lesser gifts the opportunity to treat subjects odd and strange, to strike "new notes," and to paint pictures that would be labelled as "original," while he concerned himself with our Divine Lord, His Blessed Mother, and His saints, with the great truths of his religion, and with all things perennial and fundamental, on which are based the highest hopes of mankind.

■

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PAINTER OF "THE LAST SUPPER"

Leonardo da Vinci

ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO, Fra Angelico, and Masaccio form a trio whose aim, as we have seen in previous chapters, was a characteristic portrayal of the beautiful such as they found it in nature. Piero and Antonio Pollaiuolo, Piero della Francesca, Alesso Baldovinetti, and Andrea Verrocchio taught similar doctrines to the succeeding generation. Filippo and Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, and Pesellino were among those whose inclinations lay in a more romantic direction. Domenico Ghirlandaio prepared the way for Fra Bartolommeo and Raphael; Signorelli, with his freely flying figures and his audacious grouping, prepared the way, if only in a shadowy manner for Michelangelo, and Andrea Verrocchio prepared the way for his most illustrious pupil, Leonardo da Vinci.

The genius of Brunelleschi, the student of Rome's ancient monuments, and the works of Alberti, scholar and artist, had revived architecture according to classical models. Sculpture, led by Donatello, della Robbia, and Ghiberti, had kept pace with the study of nature and the antique. The works of the Van Eycks had influenced every Italian artist from Naples to Milan. Italian writers had imbibed the most diverse systems of literature, philosophy, art, and culture; the creative genius of the race had displayed its power of assimilation capable of blending all that the East and West, Christianity and Paganism, had brought forth. The meeting and mixture of deep religious fervour with classic Grecian beauty and an accurate study of nature had given mankind the art of Fra Angelico and Masaccio—the art of one who had painted angels and saints whose bodies seemed to be transfused with the light of their souls, and the art of the other who, as Villari so impressively says, "wrapped his majestic figures in noble, broad-folded draperies recalling the toga and chlamys of ancient statuary." And now the way was prepared for the coming of Leonardo, in whose works were to be re-

reached "a degree of perfection in which are summed up all the knowledge acquired by two centuries of Florentine painters added to his own unapproached knowledge of the effects of light," and a superior genius, capable of giving organic unity to the work already accomplished by the national spirit and of leading it to a definite goal.

LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452-1519) was born at the Castle Vinci, situated in the valley of the Arno, between Pisa and Florence. He was the natural son of Ser Piero Antonio da Vinci, notary to the Signoria of Florence, and he was brought up entirely in his father's house. His contemporaries note one and all the peak of his personal beauty, of his courtly manners, of his manly dignity and great physical strength. An anonymous biographer says: "His figure was beautifully proportioned, and he had a noble and engaging presence, his carefully combed hair fell in luxuriant curls as far as his waist." In Giovanni's biography we read: "He was of an extremely kind and generous disposition, of most striking appearance, with fine features. He was possessed of much taste, and had also a special talent for entertaining, which he notably displayed in the conduct of theatrical performances, and was especially welcomed as a companion of princes." The only authentic likeness we possess of Leonardo is the red chalk drawing now in Turin, which he made of himself during the last years of his life. This pastel is the portrait of a patriarch and not that of a man in his sixties, and it shows his forehead broad and noble, his hair and beard long and flowing, his nose strongly marked, his mouth delicately pencilled, yet full of determination, and his penetrating eyes almost hidden beneath bushy brows. Unremitting work must have furrowed his countenance beyond actual years, for an attendant in the suite of the Cardinal of Aragon who visited him, a few years before his death, wrote of him as "a grey-beard of more than seventy years," when he was but in his sixty-fourth year.

Of his early education we are certain of very little. Vasari, who is as interesting as he is unreliable, says of him: "In arithmetic he made such rapid progress that he often confounded the master who was teaching him by the perpetual doubts he started, and by the difficulty of the questions he proposed. He also commenced the study of music and resolved to acquire the art of playing the lute, when, being by nature of an exalted imagination and full of most graceful vivacity, he sang to that instrument most divinely, improvising at the same time both the verses and the music." Yet of all his early cultural pursuits, drawing and modelling in clay must have had the greatest charm for him, and at an early age, probably in his fifteenth year, his father placed him in the studio of Andrea Verrocchio—whose influence

was as widespread in Leonardo's youth as was that of Masaccio in an earlier generation—in order that the boy's genius would be carefully developed by a thorough artistic training. There Leonardo first met two other pupils of his master, Perugino and Lorenzo di Credi, and possibly Botticelli, who were destined to win great renown.

Leonardo was admitted to the Guild of Painters in 1472, but was still in his master's studio in 1476. Among his early efforts are his "Annunciation" now in the Louvre, which has at various times been attributed to a number of artists, notably to Lorenzo di Credi and to Andrea Verrocchio himself. In this small oblong work the Blessed Virgin and the Angel Gabriel are posed gracefully and naturally; its colouring is light and warm; the treatment of the light and shade is broad and decided. On the right is shown the outlines of a house, and on the left a stretch of lawn bright with flowers, while above a low wall thickly leaved trees are seen against a clear evening sky. An examination of another "Annunciation" in the Uffizi, attributed to him, will prove the improbability of both paintings being the work of the same artist. The placid figures of Mary and Gabriel in the large Uffizi panel lack the intense feeling of those in the Louvre picture. In the Uffizi painting, the heavy billowy draperies and the treatment of the flowery lawn in the foreground smack of Lorenzo di Credi rather than of Leonardo. It is scarcely conceivable, moreover, that the faulty perspective of the house is the work of either Leonardo or his master, who both devoted an enormous amount of their time to the study of the problems of perspective.

The unfinished picture of "S. Jerome in the Desert," now in the Vatican Gallery, the preparatory drawings of which are in Windsor, is one of the three works by Leonardo that remain in Italy. Painted probably between 1478 and 1480, it is a brown monochrome representing the saint in a kneeling posture, and has for centuries been admired as a study of movement. "Let your figures have such movements to show what each figure means," wrote Leonardo in one of his notebooks, and in this solitary emaciated kneeling figure, we see how skilfully he put into practice his own teaching. The saint, alone in the desert, is so deep in contemplation that he literally seems to have lost himself in God.

Leonardo's only authentic work in the Uffizi, his unfinished "Adoration of the Magi," which was intended to be an altar-piece for the monks of S. Donato at Scopeto, was begun in 1481, but it cannot be said to show any great advance in his technique of painting, for it is scarcely carried beyond the stage of a preliminary cartoon, an underpainting in monochrome. It is, however, an extremely full, rich, lively, and beautiful composition. Before

and around the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Babe are the kings and their retinues, and in the background crowds of people and horsemen, who in their attitudes and actions impart great life and movement to the scene. This feeling is made all the more apparent and telling when we see the obliviousness of the Blessed Virgin to all that is taking place around her, so supremely happy is she in merely gazing upon and drinking in, as it were, the beauty of her Divine Child. It is a tragedy of the history of art that the hand that pencilled "The Last Supper" did not finish this picture.

Leonardo has often been criticised for forsaking Florence for Milan and the patronage of its reigning Duke, because he could never complain of lack of offers of employment in Florence. However, an anonymous biographer gives us the reason that prompted him to leave his native city: "Lorenzo de' Medici il Magnifico adopted the young Leonardo, giving him a salary and commissions for pictures, with the garden of the Medici as his studio . . . and Leonardo was thirty years old when he was sent by Lorenzo, with Atlanto Migliorotti, to take a lute to the Duke of Milan." According to Vasari, however, Leonardo went to Milan "on his own account," with a lute which he had himself invented and constructed as a gift for the Duke, to whom he had previously written offering his services. Leonardo's letter, one of the most remarkable documents that a genius ever composed about his own powers, is part of the celebrated "Codex Atlanticus," preserved in the Ambrosian Library, in Milan. Having set forth in detail all he could do in engineering science and in the production of war appliances, in the tenth clause or paragraph he goes on to say: "In time of peace, I believe that I could equal any other as regards works in architecture, both public and private. I can likewise conduct water from one place to another. Furthermore, I can execute works in sculpture, marble, bronze, or terracotta. In painting also I can do what can be done as well as any other, be he who he may." One of the greatest tributes posterity has paid to Leonardo da Vinci, in the light of that letter, which was written when both Raphael and Michelangelo were producing their greatest masterpieces, is that posterity has never regarded him as an egotist.

In Milan Leonardo prepared plans for secular and ecclesiastical buildings, modelled in clay, painted, wrote, and experimented. One of the first paintings of his Milan period is said to have been his "Woman with a Marten," believed to be a portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, one of the ladies of the ducal court; another is his "Virgin of the Rocks," but, most important of all his works is his fresco of "The Last Supper" and his model of the equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza.

There are not many paintings by the great Italian masters, of which the world possesses two copies, but this is the case with Leonardo's "The Virgin of the Rocks." There is one copy in the Louvre and another in the National Gallery, and the contention as to whether the original is the painting now in Paris or that in London seemed until recently to be in favour of the former. From a document published in 1893 we learn that Leonardo and one of his pupils, Ambrogio de Predis, had undertaken to execute a carved altar-piece with the Blessed Virgin painted in the centre and an angel on either side, for the Confraternity of the Conception, in the Church of S. Francesco in Milan. The figure of the Blessed Virgin had been painted by Leonardo and the two angels by his pupil, when a quarrel arose over the price of the picture, which had been agreed upon beforehand. In consequence Leonardo demanded the return of his painting, but agreed that de Predis might make a copy of it, and it is this copy that is now in London, the original being in the Louvre. But knowledge acquired in recent years from scientific research into the London picture would, according to the Italian publication *Rassegna d'Arte* and the English *Burlington Magazine*, appear to determine that the National Gallery picture is the original painting designed entirely and drawn for the most part by Leonardo. Mr. Lionel Cust tells us: "So complete is the history now revealed of the painting in the National Gallery that it seems to exclude the possibility of any second version having been made by Leonardo. The history of the Paris version, therefore, now requires as clear an elucidation as that of the National Gallery painting. It is impossible to doubt that the later painting is the original work by Leonardo, begun in 1483 and completed in 1503." Sir Charles Holmes, too, tells us that: "Though it is possible that some of the accessories in "The Madonna of the Rocks" were completed by a Milanese colleague, Ambrogio de Predis, the design and the execution of the greater part of the picture are unquestionably Leonardo's own." In the case of the London copy, time has proved to be the enemy rather than the ally of the painter, for the ivory-black which formed the foundation of the painting has come through, throwing the whole picture, with the exception of the yellowish high lights, into deep shadow.

The points of difference between the two paintings are numerous but trifling and need not detain us here. Suffice it to say that no lovelier figures than those of the Blessed Virgin and the attendant angel in this splendid example of isosceles triangle grouping have ever been painted by Leonardo or any other artist. The figures of the Divine Infant and the baby S. John are those of chubby, well-looked-after children, with plenty of flesh on their bones, and show us that by his anatomical researches Leonardo had gained

exact knowledge of every movement of the human body. They show us also his advance upon the achievements of the Pollaiuoli. The four figures are not only cleverly but very tenderly united by gestures and looks; the children by the reverence of one and the benediction of the other; the angel by her glance which directs attention to S. John, and Mary by her hands, one raised guardingly and in blessing over her Son and the other caressing His Precursor. Leonardo in this and in his later paintings reached so supreme an excellence in draughtsmanship and brushwork, in faithfulness of portraiture, and in vivacity and novelty of expression that his figures seem to be real, living, breathing creatures. His silver point drawing for the angel's head, now in Turin, is so delicately beautiful as to be almost unique in Renaissance art. Benignant solicitude is the expression on Mary's face; her glance beneath her lowered eyelids seems to wander from one child to the other, and so life-like and truthful is this work that the beholder almost expects to see her eyes move and her lips break into a loving smile. The grotto of rocks — through which one can see the sky, a softly flowing stream, and rocks, which fade away into the distance — from which this art treasure takes its name, is redolent of Fra Filippo Lippi, but the faces of the Madonna and the Angel have an ethereal beauty that Lippi could never have captured, and those of the two children surpass the greatest efforts of Correggio, who was famed for his ability to reproduce childlike expression.

Having begun his famous *Treatise on Painting* and recommenced his work on the colossal equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza which won him imperishable renown as a sculptor, even though it was never to be cast, Leonardo began his great master-work "The Last Supper" on the wall of the refectory of the Dominican Friary of S. Maria delle Grazie, in Milan.

During the fifteenth century the institution of the Blessed Sacrament formed a very common subject for representation on the walls of monastery and convent refectories. In 1480, shortly before Leonardo left Florence, Ghirlandaio's "Last Supper" was completed there, in the refectory of the Convent Ognissanti, and Leonardo must have known of Andrea del Castagno's treatment of the same subject in the refectory of S. Apollonia, for his picture resembles both these frescoes in general treatment. Andrea del Castagno was the first to find a new method of treatment, one in keeping with the Renaissance spirit. In his painting, only the figures of S. John and Judas recall the arrangement of mediaeval compositions: John leans forward in slumber his head upon his arms, while Judas sits apart at the near side of the table opposite our Blessed Lord. In Ghirlandaio's picture we find the same idea of grouping, and it would seem that both artists were puzzled as to how they

should depict the Beloved Disciple resting upon the Saviour's bosom. In Giotto's "Last Supper," in Padua, the heads of the Apostles, turned from the spectator and surrounded by enormous nimbi, have an almost ludicrous effect. Andrea del Castagno, Ghirlandaio, and Leonardo da Vinci left out the nimbi, but Leonardo was the first to represent our Lord and all the apostles seated on the far side of the table. A comparison between the "Last Supper" in the Convent of S. Apollonia, in Florence, with that in S. Maria delle Grazie clearly proves that not only in general outline, but also in his conception of the figures, Andrea del Castagno must be regarded as the inspirer of da Vinci's greatest masterpiece. In its main features Leonardo's presentment of the subject is the same as that of the early masters of the Florentine Renaissance; but, as with Giotto and Fra Angelico, the concept was different.

The refectory of S. Maria delle Grazie stands beside the church, and as one enters it the dim faint outline of the great fresco appears at the upper end of a bare, anything-but-heartsome, and lofty-ceilinged chamber. One sees at a glance that Leonardo framed his composition with a simplicity at that time unknown to the Lombards, and did not avail himself of the architectonic lines of the hall. Very noble and simple is the grey hall in which our Divine Lord is seated with His Apostles: the ceiling is formed of lacunars in perspective, and the walls, adorned with tapestry, narrow gradually towards the end where three windows open on the country. The head of our Lord is portrayed within the oblong of the central pedimented window against hills and sky. He is seated at the centre of the table, already prepared for a meal, and has pronounced the terrible accusation: "One of you shall betray Me," which arouses in the hearts of his hearers a veritable tempest of surprise, doubt, and agitation. Each one of the Apostles would fain cry out and assure their Master of his loyalty, and their feelings are manifested not only in their countenances but also through the sudden gestures of their figures and the complex movements of their arms and hands, in contrast with the static pose of our Saviour. Our Lord sits upright, His arms opened, His hands lying almost inert on the snow-white cloth in an attitude of calm serenity. He has eaten and drunk with them, the time of His agony of Gethsemane is near at hand and the hour of His crucifixion is rapidly approaching. After His astounding revelation, He waits in silence to add that the traitor is the disciple who will dip his hand in the plate with Him. His face—which according to the legend accepted and related by Vasari, was left unfinished, because Leonardo would not seek, because he knew he could not find, the heavenly grace and beauty incarnated in Christ

— is veiled with sadness; His lowered eyes do not follow any of the Apostles, not even his beloved John; His whole spirit seems to be absorbed in a sublime spiritual elevation and surrendered up to the divine heroism of the approaching sacrifice. Leonardo strove to express here not the mystical moment of Consecration, but the most dramatic moment, that in which the consciences of those present, purified by the rite, are surprised, perturbed, or indignant at the announcement of their Divine Master. This is perhaps the most famous picture in the world, the most perfect composition in the history of painting of all ages, and the one that has most often been reproduced. The fresco attracted immense attention and interest even while Leonardo was at work upon it, and many contemporary writers like Bandello, the romancist, have left us descriptions of the painter at work.

"He used often to go early in the morning," writes Bandello, "and mount upon the platform and, from sunrise until the dusk of evening, never put down his brush, and forgetting to eat and drink, paint without ceasing. Then two, three, or four days would pass when he would not touch it, but remained for one or two hours together contemplating, considering, and examining within himself, judging his figures. I have seen him, too, according as his caprice or humour moved him, go off at noon-day, when the sun was in Leo, from the Corte Vecchia, where he was composing his stupendous horse of clay (his equestrian monument), and come straight to the Grazie, and mounting the platform, take a brush and give one or two strokes to one of the figures and straightway depart and go elsewhere."

The fame of Leonardo's fresco spread throughout Europe, and when Louis XII entered Milan in 1499, he came to see it and expressed the desire to carry it off to France. With him were Ercole, Duke of Ferrara, Gian Francesco, Marquis of Mantua, Caesar Borgia, and many other historic personages. Possibly it was on the occasion of such a visit to the newly finished picture, that Leonardo first made the acquaintance of the extraordinary man into whose service he entered, as military engineer and inspector of fortifications, when Borgia was at the zenith of his career in 1502.

The greatest men of every age have stood before "The Last Supper" in silent admiration; many great litterateurs have described it, and among such descriptions Goethe's stands pre-eminent and is acknowledged the world over to be one of the most remarkable and penetrating appreciations of art. All lovers of art should read this critical estimate of a work which, when it was newly finished, was so soul-enthraling, so moving, and so perfect in every detail that it was regarded by his contemporaries as the climax of Leonardo's artistic achievement.

But Leonardo's "Last Supper" in its entirety and in the original is no longer ours. Dampness began and vandalism completed the ruin of his "Last Supper." In 1652 a door opening was broken through the wall on which it is painted, destroying the feet of our Lord and of two Apostles; in 1726 and again in 1770 this fresco was injured by restorations; in 1797 French troops occupied the Grazie, made a stable of the refectory and mutilated the masterpiece. It was restored in 1908 with great success by Professor Cavenaghi, but when we last saw the picture, in 1937, we realised — as have all those who have examined the contemporary copy in the Louvre, by Marco d' Oggiono, and the copy purchased from a grocer in Milan in 1793, and now in the Royal Academy, London — that we were not gazing at the work as it originally came from Leonardo's hands. Indeed in several of the faces of the Apostles the expression is so unnatural and exaggerated as to be unworthy of Leonardo's brush.

A singular fatality ruled the destiny of not only Leonardo's "Last Supper" but of nearly all the most famous of his works. Two of the three most important were never completed, obstacles having arisen while he was engaged on them, which obliged him to leave them in an unfinished condition, namely the Sforza monument and the wall painting of the battle of Anghiri. Some of his finished pictures as well as some of his sculptures have been lost. Modern criticism has robbed him of works formerly ascribed to him; and so we are left to-day with but three or four of his important authenticated works which we may compare with those of his great predecessors and contemporaries. Even these have been destroyed and restored so many times it is questionable if there is in existence to-day one complete work actually painted entirely by Leonardo's own hand. As early as 1625 his "Mona Lisa," for example, is recorded to have been in a bad condition. So it is in his astonishingly accurate pen-and-ink and red-chalk drawings, in his literary works, and in the appreciative opinions of his contemporaries that we find proof of Leonardo's genius.

The qualifications of both Michelangelo and Raphael, great masters though they were, pale into insignificance when compared with those of Leonardo, for a detailed study of his life-work reveal him as an author, critic, philosopher, psychologist, scientist, mathematician, military engineer, architect, sculptor, painter, poet, musician, physiologist, and botanist. He studied anatomy and chemistry, and arranged great pageants and gorgeous spectacles with the same zest that he planned canals, tunnels, and designed flying machines. Indeed, his investigations of natural phenomena led him to conclusions that anticipated many of the most significant discoveries of

later ages. For example, he successfully completed an underwater machine but would not describe his inventions lest mankind would *put it to improper uses*. What a contrast there is between this fifteenth-century Stoic and the so-called Christian inventors of to-day! In Dr. Jean Paul Richter's translations of Leonardo's manuscripts, we have the painter-inventor's own words: "And how and wherefore I do not describe my method of remaining under water and how long I can remain without eating. And I do not publish nor divulge these, by reason of the evil nature of men, who would use them for assassinations at the bottom of the sea by destroying ships and sinking them, together with the men in them." Leonardo did not, it is obvious, devote his energies to any single art, but to art itself in every one of its various manifestations, both aesthetic and scientific, and he strove to investigate, to study and to know them all; and with all these and many other divergent interests he gave but a small amount of his time and attention to painting. It is, therefore, not surprising that only a few pictures came from his hands. Leonardo was a law unto himself; he stands alone in the history of art; he conceived and realised ideals wholly independent from the antique. He based all art instruction exclusively and entirely upon the study of nature, and whole-heartedly praised both Giotto and Masaccio for doing likewise. His method was to observe and experiment, and few men the world has known ever amassed such encyclopaedic knowledge. But it was, also, his all-round greatness as a scientist and an artist that left him unsatisfied with work that would have pleased and delighted lesser men and prevented him from finishing all save a few of his paintings. In his work, knowledge and art were never separated, and his researches, instead of adequately serving him, made him ever dissatisfied with his technical powers to such an extent that he was seldom able to produce work perfect enough to satisfy his own tremendously high ideals. Raphael, as we have attempted to point out, copied his masters Viti and Perugino, permitted himself to be influenced by Masaccio, strove to learn all he could from his greatest predecessors and contemporaries without ever permitting himself to become the slave of any one of them; but Leonardo would learn of no man; he would have no master but nature; in art as in science he would admit the authority of neither the ancients nor the scholastics. There could be no more complete contrast between two artists than that between Michelangelo and Leonardo; the great Florentine sculptor was emotional to the point of furious impatience, he was constantly goaded by inspirations to which he felt he was unable, and had not the opportunity, to give expression; and, instead of leaving behind him a number of pieces of sculpture in addition to those



VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS

Leonardo da Vinci



THE LAST SUPPER

Leonardo da Vinci



LAST SUPPER (Detail)

Leonardo da Vinci



MONA LISA

Leonardo da Vinci

that came from his hands, he harassed himself unnecessarily during the best years of his life quarrying blocks of marble. Leonardo, on the other hand, remained cool, calm, analytical, guided solely by his intellect, and — while he wearied himself with thought, striving for perfection in every detail of any painting on which he was engaged — was so ready to drop his brushes at a moment's notice that we are forced to realise that painting was to him merely one, and not the most important, of the modes of expression of a man of universal genius, who was able to outstrip his time in every branch of art and human knowledge, and who practised this art only when something more important failed to arouse his attention and absorb his energies.

The chief aim of Leonardo's whole career as a painter was to produce an ideal type of superhuman loveliness, the exposition of a divine smile or the suggestion of smile hovering round the lips of some of his faces. He applied himself so assiduously to the perception, invention, and reproduction of the most varied expressions, comic, tragic, severe, serene, of the human countenance, and he studied the formation of so many ugly, deformed, and grotesque heads, that he fitted himself to draw beautiful countenances because he knew, as no one before him, the structure and anatomy of tragic and monstrous ones. "Perpetually endeavouring to make clear to himself," says Burckhardt, "the anatomical causes of all physical appearance and movements, he then turns with admirable, quick, and sure rendering to the intellectual expression, and gives the whole scale from heavenly purity to all the depths of absurdity and corruption. In him are united the beautiful soul of the enthusiast with the strongest power of thought and the highest understanding of the conditions of ideal composition. He is more real than all earlier artists where the point is reality, and then again sublime and free as few have been in any century."

Leonardo da Vinci might be held up as the ideal of a perfect and complete man peculiar to the Italian spirit, were it not for the fact that he was anything but a good Catholic, for the terms Italian and Catholic are synonymous. Admittedly, in his will, he commends his soul to our Blessed Lord, to the glorious Virgin Mary, and to S. Michael and all the angels and saints in heaven; admittedly he received the Last Rites of the Church on his deathbed; admittedly he expressed the wish to be interred in the Church of S. Florentino, in Amboise, in France, where he died; admittedly he gave directions for having Masses said for the repose of his soul. However he did not believe in miracles; he despised, if he did not hate, priests, "Pharisees, that is to say, friars," is one of the pungent epigrams he made against them;

and, as Gillet well puts it, "he would logically admit only an immanent Providence, a God who refrains from intervention in the universe like the God of Lucretius or the Stoics." Therefore, as a painter and not as a philosopher, did he accommodate himself to the Christian tradition, and, as a painter, he stands with Michelangelo and Raphael as one of the three real initiators of the highest phase of the art of the Renaissance.

We said in the first chapter of this book that the men the human race has most loved in life and honoured by lasting remembrance in death have been men who expressed religion in art. No better proof of the truth of this statement can be offered than the honour and reverence in which Leonardo da Vinci's name is held the world over, even to this day. The world has forgotten his contribution to the science of mathematics, that he was the first to restore the laws relating to the use of the lever, and that those connected with statics and hydrostatics, discovered by Stevinns a century later, were thoroughly understood by him. The world has forgotten that he is really the father of the science of hydraulics and that he—not Cesare Cesarini nor Cardanus—discovered the *camera obscura*; the world has forgotten that we have it on the authority of Grotte that his rope-making machine was the best one ever made; that the type of saw that he invented is used till this day for cutting marble in the Carrara quarries. The world has forgotten his osteological and psychological studies, and that the accuracy of his anatomical drawings have never been equalled. Yes, the world has forgotten all these things, but the world has never forgotten that Leonardo da Vinci's was the hand that painted "The Last Supper."

Leonardo died in France, at the age of sixty-seven, in 1519. "May God Almighty grant him His eternal peace," wrote his friend and assistant, Francesco Melzi, "every one laments the loss of a man whose life Nature cannot produce a second time."

CHAPTER TWELVE

FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURY MILANESE AND FLORENTINE PAINTERS

From Luini to Andrea del Sarto

UNLIKE Raphael or Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci had no Florentine pupils and founded no school in the city by the Arno. Yet his influence made itself felt in the work of almost every artist of his own and succeeding generations. Many Milanese painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were his scholars or followers. Bernardino Luini, of whose early life so little is known but who attained wide renown with his "Madonna of the Rose," which modern critics proclaim his greatest masterpiece, was a student of da Vinci. Francesco Melzi, descendant of a noble family, accompanied Leonardo to France and was made heir to all his designs and manuscripts. Ambrogio Stefani da Fossano, though he was perhaps influenced more by Foppa and Zenale, worked under the master. Gaudenzio Ferrari, who imitated, at different parts of his career, first one and then another of his fellow painters, Perugino and Raphael as well as Leonardo, but not with any startling results, followed the painter of the "Last Supper." Andrea Salai was sometime pupil, sometime servant, sometime assistant, but ever the life-long friend of the painter of "Mona Lisa." And Cesare da Sesto, who for a period worked with Raphael, was one of Leonardo's ablest scholars.

Of those we have just mentioned no one stands out more conspicuously than BERNARDINO LUINI (c. 1475-c. 1532). Vasari incorrectly calls him Bernardo del Lupino. A native of Milan, he was the son of Giovanni Lutero of Luino, a village on the Lago Maggiore. It is generally believed that he studied for some time directly under Leonardo himself; and many of his paintings have a decided resemblance to the great Florentine's style and methods of execution. Luini cannot be called a great master, for he was notoriously weak in composition, witness the tortuous overcrowding of his

Lugano "Crucifixion and Passion" fresco. Moreover he was not gifted with any great powers of imagination, although, perhaps, we should not deny altogether imaginative powers to the artist who was bold enough to paint in the Lugano fresco a beautiful, kneeling angel on the arms of the cross of the penitent thief, and a voracious, crawling devil on the arms of the cross of the impenitent thief. To his weakness of composition we must add that his knowledge of landscape was slight, and that skies, clouds, and trees always seemed to baffle him. Nevertheless, he was a sincere, hard-working, simple painter who left behind him a great amount of good—and some really excellent—work in fresco and in easel pictures. Ruskin believed that Luini laboured in constant and successful simplicity, and that "he entirely united the religious temper, which was the spirit life of art, with the physical power which was its body-life," and that he joined the purity and passion of Fra Angelico to the strength of Paul Veronese. Kugler, writing about him as a pupil of Leonardo's, said: "he rarely rises to the greatness and freedom of Leonardo, but he has a never-failing tenderness and purity, a cheerfulness and sincerity, a grace and a feeling which give an elevated pleasure to the student of his works." We, who have examined many of Luini's pictures, agree not only with these estimates but with the fine tribute Symonds pays to him, when he says that in idea Luini had "an original and exquisite feeling for loveliness of form, a poetic sentiment, and a love for the vivacity and the joy of life, combined with a deep sense of its profounder side, its pathos, its sorrow and its suffering."

His exquisite feeling for loveliness of form is to be seen not in his frescoes but in some of his easel pictures, with their always harmonious blendings of velvety reds, delicate greens, faint roses, intense purples, and deep browns—notably in his "S. Catherine and Two Angels," and in his "Madonna and Child with SS. Catherine and Barbara." Luini is best known to-day by the pictures just mentioned, by his "Mystic Marriage of S. Catherine" and his "Burial of S. Catherine" in the Brera Gallery, and by his "Il Salvatore" and "Head of the Virgin" in the Ambrosiana, in Milan. Other well-known paintings of his are "Salome with the Head of S. John the Baptist"—a horrible subject very delicately and artistically treated—in the Uffizi, and his "Christ Disputing with the Pharisees," in the National Gallery, London.

The influence of Leonardo da Vinci was, as we have stated, felt far beyond the limits of his own time or that of his scholars. His paintings were the wonder of the age, and the beginning of the sixteenth century saw a race of artists spring up in Florence who emulated his works with conspicuous success, the most notable, probably, being Lorenzo di Credi, Piero di Cosimo,

Mariotto Albertinelli, Fra Bartolommeo, and Andrea del Sarto. Of the first three of these we shall make but brief mention, but of Fra Bartolommeo because he belongs to the culmination of art in its rising side, and of Andrea del Sarto because he stands as near to the greatest artists on the other side and is the last of the group before the decline, we shall make greater mention.

LORENZO DI CREDI (1459-1537), was born in Florence the son of the goldsmith Andrea. He was a fellow pupil of Leonardo da Vinci and Perugino in the studio of Andrea Verrocchio. Lorenzo was his master's favourite pupil, for, during his last illness, Verrocchio recommended Lorenzo to the Doge and the Signory of Venice as the artist best fitted to complete the great Colleoni statue on which he was then engaged. A man of gentle and affectionate disposition, Lorenzo di Credi was held in high esteem by his brother artists for his honesty of purpose and the soundness of his judgments, and was frequently called upon to act as arbitrator in disputes regarding the value of works of art.

Although an excellent portrait painter, it was as a painter of religious subjects that Lorenzo won some measure of renown, but the range of his art is limited almost exclusively to panels of Madonnas and saints, nativities, annunciations, and adorations. His paintings are noted for their careful execution and minute finish, but he sinks at times into mere prettiness. He is inclined to exaggerate tenderness of modelling into plumpness of form; and there is frequently more of sentimentality than of thought in his attitude towards his subjects. Lorenzo di Credi painted mostly in oil. His colours are always clean, clear, and sharp — his servant we are told, was forbidden to sweep his studio lest he should raise dust; his drawings of drapery is excellent, and, although he never attained either the grace of Leonardo's forms or the ardent devotion of some of Perugino's heads, sincerity and earnestness emanate from his best paintings. The most important works extant by Lorenzo di Credi are his "Adoration of the Shepherds" in the Accademia, and his "Madonna and Child with Saints," now in the Louvre.

One of the most representative painters of the Renaissance, PIERO DI COSIMO (1462-1521), is an artist many of whose works have formerly passed under the names of other masters, but some of which have been restored to him by modern scientific criticism. He is one of the four Florentine masters whose names appear in Leonardo da Vinci's note-books. He was an odd, eccentric, but withal deeply religious man, who led a very singular life. His whimsicalities and capricious nature are described by Vasari, and clever use was made of his unusual character by George Eliot in her famous novel

Romola. The son of Lorenzo Chimenti, himself a goldsmith-painter, Piero was born in Florence and apprenticed at an early age to Cosimo Rosselli, from whom he derived the name by which he is known in the history of art. There are to-day in Italy, Germany, France, Holland, England, and the United States, some thirty-one or thirty-two works by him or ascribed to him. Of all these the best-known are, perhaps, his "Destruction of Pharoah in the Red Sea," in the Sistine Chapel, which was for long supposed to be the work of his master, Rosselli; and his works in the Uffizi, the Louvre, and the National Gallery, London. Piero's work was profoundly influenced by the arrival in Florence of the famed Portinari altar-piece of Hugo van der Goes, in which he studied the minute rendering of objects to such good account that he was said to be gifted with "almost incredible patience."

It may be said of Piero that he preferred mythological to theological subjects, and the types he created are unusual, elfish, quaint, unbeautiful, clumsy, and yet he has created none that are, strictly speaking, ungraceful. This romantic bent of his genius enabled him to depict grotesque monsters, strange animals, and fantastic costumes, and to throw a sort of fairy glamour over the Greek myths he painted so quaintly. Amongst his allegorical works derived from his study of the Latin poets are his "Death of Procris" and the three "Perseus and Andromeda" panels.

Piero is represented in the Louvre exclusively by religious pictures: his "Coronation of Virgin, with SS. Jerome, Francis, Bonaventura, and Louis of Toulouse," his "Madonna and Child," and "S. John the Baptist as a Child." However, he merits our attention not only as a painter of mythological conceits and religious pictures, but as a landscapist and a portrait painter of the first rank. Vasari describes his portraits of his own intimate friends Giulano and Francesco di San Gallo, which were discovered by Signor Frizzoni and are now treasured at the Hague. There are, moreover, his portraits of Caterina Sforza, the heroic woman who held the citadel of Forli against Caesar Borgia and the combined French and Papal armies; and of "La Bella Simonetta," that lovely Genoese maiden, called by some "the star of Genoa" and by others "the sun of Florence," who was so sweet and charming that "all men praised her and no woman envied her," and whom Botticelli immortalised in his "Primavera." Lastly, we have his "Portrait of a Warrior" in the National Gallery, London. This exquisite picture represents a Florentine general in armour of Milanese type, and has been variously said to represent Francesco Ferrucci or Malatesta Baglioni. The head, depicting a man of refined type in the prime of life, seems charged with a somewhat dreamy gentleness, which is enhanced by the sombre golden tone and

the circular cap or turban which the knight is wearing. The small size of the hands denotes a person of rather slight and delicate build. The interesting little street scene in the background is very characteristic of Piero; it is a faithful rendering of the Piazza della Signoria, showing Michelangelo's colossal statue of David as it was when set up in the front of the Palazzo Vecchio.

Piero di Cosimo was of a lonely, aloof disposition. He lived alone, and was found dead one morning, in 1521, at the foot of the staircase in his home.

MARIOTTO ALBERTINELLI (1474-1515), was the fellow student, collaborator, partner, life-long friend, and enthusiastic admirer of Baccio della Porta, later known as Fra Bartolommeo, but Bartolommeo, being the stronger individuality of the two, impressed his personality, his ideas, his ideals, and his style so completely on the art of his friend that to this day—notwithstanding the research work of some of the ablest critics—considerable confusion rules in the attribution of certain pictures, which by some are held to be the work of one, and by others to be the work of the other master. We must, therefore, in this brief mention of him, as one of the immediate predecessors of Fra Bartolommeo and Andrea del Sarto, confine our attention to one of his works of whose authenticity there exists no doubt; and such a painting is his famous Uffizi "Visitation," which has even been regarded as his greatest masterpiece.

Albertinelli painted this picture in 1503 for the Community of SS. Martino and Elizabetta. It depicts the visit of the Blessed Virgin to her cousin, S. Elizabeth, the mother of S. John the Baptist. The two holy women meet under a decorated colonnade or portico with richly carved square columns, through which one sees a slightly clouded blue sky. The grouping is felicitous; the draperies are worthy of Fra Bartolommeo at his best; and the low-keyed tone of colour—the deep blue of Mary's mantle and Elizabeth's green robe and orange cloak—is heightened by glazes applied with marvellous skill. The subject is one which appealed strongly to the imagination of many of the world's great artists and has been treated by, amongst others, Ghirlandaio, Pinturicchio, Raphael, Palma Vecchio, Sebastian del Piombo, Rembrandt, Rubens, and Tintoretto. But not even the greatest of these masters was able to put into his conception of this historic happening, so tersely recorded in S. Luke's Gospel, the intensity of feeling, the exquisite tenderness, the eager joy, and the spirit of reverence Albertinelli has succeeded in getting into his depiction of the reunion of the mother of the Saviour and the mother of His Precursor.

We said in an early chapter of this book that the connexion of the

Dominican Order with Christian art dates almost from its foundation. The building of S. Maria Novella was begun in 1278 by two lay brothers, its walls were frescoed by Greek artists invited to Florence by the Republic, and, under the direction of successive generations, it became a very museum of art. The Dominicans were themselves fresco painters, glass painters, sculptors, architects, miniaturists, and missal-illuminators, and while elsewhere the arts may have gained themselves an ill name in those epochs of luxury and moral relaxation, the little schools of painting nurtured in Dominican cloisters in Rome, Naples, Gaeta, Cortona, Siena, Fiesole, and Florence, were invariably born of the spirit of religious discipline and reform preached by some of the ablest and holiest of S. Dominic's sons. Blessed John Dominic, Cardinal of S. Sixtus; S. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence; and the great reformer, Savonarola, are conspicuous among those who fostered schools of Christian art in the very convents into which they introduced the most austere reforms. Blessed John Dominic was an excellent miniaturist and some of the choir books he illuminated are still preserved. Fra Angelico received his first instructions in drawing—according to Dominican writers—not from any secular Florentine master but from one of their own order, Blessed Lawrence of Ripafracta, then Master of Novices in Cortona; and it was S. Antoninus who, when appointed Prior of S. Marco's, summoned Fra Angelico to the new foundation and urged him to paint what are now regarded as some of his greatest masterpieces. As a building the Convent of S. Marco has been a veritable shrine of art since Michelozzi erected it. Many artists have lived within its walls and not the least of these was Savonarola, who in early life was an illuminator and a musician with the love of the beautiful strong within him. A holy and sincere priest and a man of dominating personality, he attacked evil where and when he saw it, and the Papacy, the Medici princes, systems of government, morals, literature, art, all in turn cowered under the lash of his tongue. Many of the leading artists of the city, the della Robbias, Lorenzo di Credi, Cronaca, and others, came daily to the Duomo to hear his sermons, and with them came the son of a muleteer, Pagholo Fattorino, who was destined to be ranked as the last truly great Florentine artist of the Renaissance.

Bartolommeo di Paolo di Jacopo del Fattorino (1475-1517), commonly called Baccio della Porta—he lived near one of the gates of Florence—till his reception into the Dominican Order, after which he became known to fame as FRA BARTOLOMMEO, or *Il Frate*, marks the transition of the Renaissance from its early period to the time of its greatest splendour, and is, after Fra Angelico, the most purely religious of all the Florentine painters. He



PORTRAIT OF A LADY

Lorenzo di Credi



THE VISITATION

Mariotto Albertinelli



THE BEWAILING

Fra Bartolommeo



MADONNA OF THE HARPIES (Detail)

Andrea del Sarto

was born near Florence in 1475 and died near it at the early age of forty-two. In 1484 he entered the studio of Cosimo Rosselli, where he made the acquaintance of Piero di Cosimo and Mariotto Albertinelli in collaboration with whom he was destined to execute many important works. Inspired by the sermons of Savonarola he burned his studies of the nude and other non-religious pictures, as did Lorenzo di Credi and many other Florentine painters, and thus many of his early studies have been lost. Baccio and Albertinelli painted together from 1492 till 1500, and from 1509 till 1512. The works they executed separately bear their respective signatures; and their joint efforts are distinguished by a device of a cross inside two interlaced rings.

Growing ever more zealous and enthusiastic in Savonarola's cause, he was one of the Dominican's defenders when the mob of the Arrabbiati stormed S. Marco's on April 9, 1498. After Savonarola's tragic death, he surrendered all his goods to his brother, renounced the world, laid aside his brushes and palette, leaving the fresco of "The Last Judgement," on which he had been at work, to be finished by Albertinelli, and eventually took religious vows in the Dominican Convent at Prato in 1500. On his return to Florence, however, he was thrown in the company of the learned Sancti Pagnini, then a member of the community of S. Marco's, who induced him to resume the study of his art, and who became to him what S. Antoninus had been to Fra Angelico, to such good account that Père Marchese did not exaggerate when he wrote: "San Marco has within its walls the Renaissance, a compendium in two artists, Fra Angelico the painter of the ideal, Fra Bartolommeo of form!" Fra Bartolommeo became head of the painting studio of S. Marco's in 1505; we hear of him in 1508 in Venice; in 1510 in Rome; and in 1515 in Lucca. He died in the country nursing establishment of the Dominicans at Pian di Mugnone, near Florence, on October 15, 1517.

The earliest existing work by Fra Bartolommeo is his profile portrait of Savonarola, painted in 1498, of which in his last years he painted another version, now in the Accademia of Florence. In the following year he began the now almost completely destroyed fresco of "The Last Judgement" in S. Maria Nuova, which Raphael so much admired. Then, to the years 1504 and 1510 respectively, we owe his graceful and dainty "Vision of S. Bernard," painted for a chapel in the Badia and which may still be seen in the Accademia but much injured by repainting; and his "Marriage of S. Catherine," now in the Pitti, notable for the grace and dignity of the figure of the Blessed Virgin, which has scarcely been surpassed by Raphael, and for the depth of its devotional feeling. The colouring of this painting, like others

of Il Frate's, has suffered from an overabundant use of lamp-black. In the Pitti Gallery, too, may be seen his stately and dignified "Christ with the Four Evangelists," and his "Deposition from the Cross." The latter is not only one of his masterpieces, but one of the most poignant and tender depictions of this tragic event ever painted by an artist. In 1508 and 1509 Fra Bartolommeo executed two of his most beautiful altar-pieces. The first of these, "The Eternal Father Worshipped by SS. Mary Magdalene and Catherine of Siena," was commissioned by the Dominicans of Murano for the Convent of S. Peter Martyr but was never delivered to them. It is a carefully finished work of refinement and beauty and an excellent example of his colouring (more brilliant than any of his work before his visit to Venice), of his light and shade, grace of movement, and of the deep devotional feeling he was able to put into his work. The second altar-piece, a "Madonna and Child with SS. Stephen and John the Baptist," is still well preserved in one of the chapels in the choir of the Cathedral of Lucca. It has been called "a lovely ideal of joyous infancy," and undoubtedly it is difficult to decide if the Divine Infant is more beautiful than the two angels who hover above the Madonna's head or the little angel musician, reminiscent of Gian Bellini, who sits at the base of the Madonna's throne.

Other well-known works by Fra Bartolommeo are his "S. Mark" and his "Our Lady of Mercy," a full and well-balanced composition, sublime in inspiration, powerful in expression, in which there are some magnificent groups ranged about the Madonna's throne. The first painting is not a happy study of the saint, sitting wrapped in robes so voluminous that we are reminded that to this Dominican painter is ascribed the invention of the lay figure—that ingenious device for the painting of draperies—and that he occasionally merits the rebuke that some of his ponderous-formed saints are but clothed horses for his draperies. With the merits or demerits of his other pictures we have no space to deal. His last work was the fresco of "Noli Me Tangere" which he left unfinished and which was completed by his pupil, Fra Paolino, an excellent painter, who imitated his master so perfectly as to cause confusion to this day about their respective parts in the work.

The art of this great Dominican painter is a blend of the art of many masters, of that of Masaccio, Ghirlandaio, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Perugino, and Raphael. From the first two painters he inherited his ability to portray vigorous strength and masculine beauty; from Leonardo his science of colour and composition; from Michelangelo grandeur, purity of form, and power of draughtsmanship; from Perugino his gentle sweetness; and from Raphael attitudes of the figure, drapery design, and above all devo-

tional sentiment. Indeed, his art is so complex in its derivation from these masters that it is difficult to trace its evolution. He followed Raphael in attempting to bring realism—or, should we say, spiritual realism—into religion through painting, in depicting for us scenes of our Lord's life in tenderly humanised aspects so that we should feel that *we* were of His nature and that He was of *our* nature. His consummate artistry, his technical excellence of execution, and the spirituality of Fra Angelico, whose sentiments imbued him and whose ghostly hand guided his brush, enabled him to do these things in so masterly a manner that it may with truth be said that Fra Bartolommeo painted for the soul, while his rival Andrea del Sarto, a materialist, the pupil of an eccentric master, deficient in ideality, but sharp enough to seize upon and use all that was good in the art of his predecessors, bequeathed us masterpieces of colour which may be said to have been painted for the eye only.

To be influenced in a general way by a great master, or to make fair and accurate copies of his works, or merely to ape and mimic his style and technique are three entirely different things. Fra Bartolommeo did not copy or mimic, but no Florentine watched more carefully the progress painting was making throughout the Peninsula or kept himself better acquainted with the innovations of his contemporaries. For example, we know he was acquainted with the work Leonardo did in Florence or near by between 1501 and 1508; that he was the head of the little Dominican School of art in S. Marco's when Raphael came to Florence to study the works of Michelangelo and Leonardo. Il Frate, while learning much from Raphael, helped to emancipate the great Umbrian from the mannerisms he had acquired from Perugino. We know, too, that he visited Venice and was delighted and inspired with the sumptuous colouring of the pictures and frescoes in the Venetian churches; and that he, later, studied the works of Michelangelo in Rome. Although faithful to the end to Savonarola's ideals, he was one of the first artists to accept the ideas of the new century, to put the principles of Leonardo into practice and to prepare the stage for the greatest work of Raphael. After Leonardo he may be considered—if we do not insist on regarding Michelangelo as a great painter—as the greatest master of the Florentine School.

In temperament Fra Bartolommeo was delicate, refined, and graceful. None excelled him in expressing the individuality of his subjects, in dignity of style, in reverence and stateliness of composition, or equalled him in the management of drapery. Always partial to symmetry of grouping, he avoided monotony by varying the positions and attitudes of his figures to

such good account that there is in the best of his altar-pieces a harmony between attitude and action, and the beauty of repose—but not a lifeless repose. For example, what other painter would have dared to conceive and paint S. Mary Magdelene caressing the feet of Christ in the attitude in which he has painted her in his Pitti Gallery “The Deposition from the Cross”? And what other painter could have so successfully made such an awkward, such an almost unseemly attitude into a dignified one?

We have said that Fra Bartolommeo belongs to the culmination of Italian art in its rising side, in an age when Florence, Umbria, and Venice were producing the greatest masters the world has ever known, but we must not convey the idea that he re-spiritualised art. He did not revive the supernatural school of Angelico, but he was a good Dominican and he arrived at length, says Vasari, “at the wished-for power of accompanying the labour of his hands with the uninterrupted contemplation of death.” Art was never debased in his hands; and he never departed from the principles of his great guide, Savonarola.

Probably it was Fra Bartolommeo’s friendship with Raphael that induced the Umbrian to paint Savonarola among the Doctors of the Church in his “Disputa” in the Vatican. At any rate, the “Disputa” head of the martyred Prior of S. Marco’s is a profile portrait, a copy of the likeness of Fra Girolamo painted by Fra Bartolommeo years before. Père Marchese, referring to Savonarola’s inclusion in this world-renowned fresco, calls it “the most splendid religious rehabilitation of Savonarola, the most luminous proof of his innocence, and the most convincing proof of the perfidy of his persecutors.”

As he walked the streets of Florence, ANDREA DEL SARTO (1486-1531) must have frequently heard himself referred to as Andrea *senza errori*, “Andrea the Faultless,” a title he earned by the sheer facility of his command of the craft of painting.

Andrea d’Agnolo di Francesco, known as Andrea del Sarto, from the trade of his father, was born in Florence in Val Fonda, where Albertinelli had his workshop. When but seven years old, he was placed with one Giovanni Barile, who was more a tradesman-painter than an artist, but who was generous enough, on discovering the boy’s skill at drawing, to introduce him to the odd and misanthropic Piero di Cosimo, who took him into his queer studio, and under whom he acquired that facility of execution which—when Leonardo had entered the service of the French king and Michelangelo and Raphael that of the popes—left in Florence no great artist, save Fra Bartolommeo, to dispute his supremacy as the ablest Floren-

tine master of the day. Like all the young painters of his time, he studied Masaccio's Brancacci Chapel frescoes and copied the cartoons of Michelangelo and Leonardo in the Palazzo Vecchio. He was associated with Francia Bigio between 1509 and 1510. He painted his Annunciata frescoes of the "Life of S. Filippo Benizi," which established his reputation, between 1510 and 1512. In 1511 he painted his "Adoration of the Magi"; and, in 1514, his "Nativity of the Virgin," which is lively in expression, delicate in colour, free in composition, and which Crowe and Cavalcaselle regard as being "on the highest level ever reached in fresco." Of almost equal importance are his "Madonna del Sacco," his "Birth of S. John the Baptist," and his "Last Supper," painted in 1526.

In 1516 Andrea married Lucrezia della Fede, the beautiful widow of Carlo di Recanati, a hatter, who lived in the Via San Gallo, and who had sat as a model for his "Madonna of the Visitation" two years before her husband's death. Her character was attacked by Vasari, who was for a time a pupil of Andrea's, in the first edition of his "Lives," but, in the second edition of the same work, he omitted all he previously said of her. In 1518 Andrea went to France where, according to M. Lepiscie's *Catalogue of Royal Pictures in France*, he left behind him no less than fifty works of art. But modern critics are quite certain that a number of these must have been the work of Andrea Sguazzella, the pupil he took with him to Paris and who remained there under the patronage of Cardinal de Turnon. In 1519 Andrea returned to Florence to buy works of art for Francis I for the Palace of Fontainebleau, but, according to Vasari, he used the money with which the French monarch had provided him to purchase a palatial home for himself and his wife who, whatever were her faults, retained his life-long love. If true, this episode would give us a clue not only to his character, which was weak, materialistic, and deficient in ideality, but to his paintings, many of which are, for all their loveliness of colour, insipid and imitative. In fairness it must be mentioned that this story, like many another of Vasari's, is now questioned; stress being laid on the fact that the accounts of Francis I were carefully kept and show no such disbursement of funds to the Florentine painter.

Andrea del Sarto never rose above the stock from which he sprung. There was a streak of vulgarity in him. His first master was a rough tradesman, his second master an oddity. He was, generally speaking, underpaid by his patrons. He was dominated by his wife and compelled to support her family and to neglect his own; and it is not to be wondered at that the influence of his wife's strong-willed nature on his weak and material one lowered

his morale. As the years went by, his style became more and more artificial, he painted soulless and insipid faces, and his once brilliant colouring gave place to monotonous greyness. In his best works his touch is light and broad, his figures are free, graceful, and dignified; but his ease and freedom became a showy fluency, and he aped and mimicked rather than carefully copied the methods of any painter who caught his imagination — Raphael, Dürer, Leonardo, Michelangelo, or Fra Bartolommeo. It would be incorrect to call him a "Jack-of-all-Trades"; he was a painter and nothing else; but, as a painter, it would not be beyond the mark to call him a "Jack-of-all Masters." For example, his well-known Louvre "Caritas," which suffered much on being transferred from panel to canvas in 1750, is Michelangel-esque. He adopted several figures from Dürer's engravings in his Scalzo frescoes of "Scenes from the Life of S. John the Baptist." His famous "Madonna of the Harpies," shows plainly the influence of Fra Bartolommeo in its free and confident dignity of design; he borrowed, too, from the Dominican painter the architectural arrangement of many of his compositions. The grouping of the figures in his "Last Supper," in S. Salvi, is adopted from that of Leonardo da Vinci, who had painted his famous fresco in S. Maria della Grazie a quarter of a century earlier. His Madonnas are exquisite, some of them rivalling those of Raphael in loveliness, modelling, and luminous transparency of colour, but their beauty is only a superficial beauty. Each and every tribute paid to him down the centuries, since his untimely death of the plague in Florence in his forty-second year, in 1531, has been a qualified tribute: there has been an *if* in every one of them. Vasari was of the opinion that *if* he had remained in Rome long enough to study its masterpieces, "he would have surpassed all the artists of his day." Burckhardt, although he hails him as "the greatest colourist produced by the country south of the Apennines in the sixteenth century," regards him as being wanting in what he calls "depth of soul." Charles Blanc calls him "The Raphael of Florence," and says that *if* the great Umbrian had never lived, Andrea del Sarto "would have occupied the first place in art after Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo." A more recent critic, Berenson, while admitting that Andrea approaches Giorgione and Titian as closely as could a Florentine, and "painted the one 'Last Supper' that can be looked at with pleasure after Leonardo's," is constrained to conclude that "by constantly sacrificing first spiritual, and then material significance to pose and draperies, Andrea loses all feeling for the essential in art."

That these estimates are true and well merited will be readily conceded by some of those who have had the pleasure of examining a number of his

frescoes and easel pictures, and will be as trenchantly contested by others. But such persons, if they are not painters, will find it embarrassing and extremely difficult to describe Andrea's curious technique, which, as we have noted, is a blend of that of many masters, and about which experienced artists by profession have been unable to come to a definite conclusion. Small wonder Leader Scott was moved to say: "In Giotto's or Masaccio's case the master created the art; in Andrea's it was the art of the age which made the artist." But even the least observant will realise that Andrea is a painter in the accepted sense of the word, not a mere draughtsman who produces well-coloured cartoons, a painter whose works, occasionally, win him rank with Correggio and the great Venetians on account of his sensitiveness to the delicate modulations of colour. In a word, he is a painter who is the most Venetian of all the later Florentine masters. But, after all, this is paying Andrea del Sarto but a poor, back-handed compliment, when one remembers that when he was at the height of his powers there was little more Florence could add to the history of art in Italy, and that it was in Venice that Italian art sank into that decline from which it never recovered.

Andrea del Sarto's best-known religious pictures are, perhaps, his "Madonna of the Harpies," "The Dispute of the Trinity," and "Noli Me Tangere," now in the Uffizi; his "Annunciation," "Holy Family," "S. John the Baptist," "The Mourning for Christ," and "The Assumption," now in the Pitti; his "Four Saints," in the Accademia; and his "Head of Christ" in the Annunziata. The first-named, "The Madonna of the Harpies"—so called from the harpies, or small grotesque figures carved on the pedestal upon which the Virgin stands—is the artist's acknowledged masterpiece. But it has none of the spirituality of the greatest of Raphael's Madonnas. It is a portrait of Lucrezia della Fede set upon a pedestal: a beautifully painted portrait of a lovely woman of the Medici age, with a late classic idealisation, in flowing garments and wreathed scarfs, supporting a smiling, mischievous, curly headed boy: but it is not Mary and her Divine Son. In the studies of the supporting saints, S. Francis and John the Evangelist, we see, too, the love of excessive draping which was to detract so much from his last works. "The Dispute of the Trinity" is another masterpiece, and a striking example of severe Florentine composition and design, of Venetian painting and colouring. His "Four Saints" is a beautifully painted picture, smaller now than when it graced the Hermitage of Vallombrosa, for the two exquisite little angels, which formerly divided the saints, were taken out to permit of the four holy men being made into a more compact group. His "Head of Christ," a grave and dignified conception of our Blessed Saviour, has a

majestic grandeur about it that is difficult to describe; the eyes and the lips have a wistful, appealing expression that has made it one of the most frequently reproduced of all his works.

Judged by his portraits Andrea del Sarto stands amongst the greatest of Italian painters. His "Portrait of a Sculptor" in the National Gallery, London, a half-length, life-size portrait displays his art in its most perfect form. Another masterpiece is his Uffizi "Portrait of a Woman," formerly known as "Portrait of an Artist's Wife, Lucrezia della Fede." His two superb paintings of himself, one showing him at an early age, and the other painted in 1525, showing him as a man prematurely aged before his fortieth year, which have been described as "the greatest of autobiographies," are also excellent examples of his portrait work. His pictures were painted at the sunset of Florentine glory and at the sunset of Italian art. He stood on the steps of the throne from which Leonardo and Michelangelo had once ruled all Florence, but he was never worthy to occupy it. If he had possessed higher intellectual and spiritual gifts, if he had possessed a little more refinement and aesthetic feeling, if he had been more true to himself, if he could only have spiritualised the face of Christ in his "Last Supper" as he did in his "Head" in the Annunziata, or the face of Mary in his "Madonna of the Harpies" as did Raphael in his "Madonna Ansidei," or, in other words, if the subjects of his greatest pictures, which were, necessarily religious, had not been in spirit so distinctly secular, Andrea del Sarto might, with all his failings, have won rank with the greatest religious painters and outstanding leaders of Renaissance art.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE GREATEST FLORENTINE OF THEM ALL

Michelangelo

MICHELANGELO (Michel Agnolio Buonarroti) (1475-1564), the most famous of the great Florentine artists of the Renaissance was sculptor, painter, architect, engineer, and litterateur. The greatest Florentine of them all, he carved the *Pieta*, painted the "Last Judgement," and designed the dome of St. Peter's. For Florence he designed fortifications, and to Vittoria Colonna he addressed sonnets of great, if strenuous and laboured, beauty. And so the career of so great a genius cannot be adequately described in the small space we can devote to him in this book. Michelangelo Buonarroti, who towered like some titan of old over his contemporaries, was given length of days vouchsafed to no other great artist of the Renaissance save Titian. He was born when Florence was strong and powerful, feared and respected; he saw the rise and fall of Savonarola, the successive rebellions of the next thirty years; he lived to see the city of Giotto, Dante, Boccaccio, and Lorenzo the Magnificent, bereft of her liberties, sunk in obscurity, on the way to oblivion.

Paolo Uccello died in the year Michelangelo was born. Antonio Pollaiuolo, Alesso Baldovinetti, and Benozzo Gozzoli were still at work, when he left the Medici School at Florence for Rome. Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci and Fra Bartolommeo, the Florentines; Raphael and Perugino, the Umbrians; Bellini, Giorgione, and Titian, the Venetians, were among his contemporaries. Hence, his art is the expression of two probing centuries of experiment, research, and discovery, of sustained effort, classical learning, and direct study of nature, two centuries in which all the problems of form and movement—from those which confronted Giotto at Assisi to those so successfully solved by Signorelli at Orvieto—find their highest development.

The son of Ludovico Buonarroti, who came of old Tuscan stock, Michel-

angelo was born at Caprese, a small place in the upper valley of the Arno between Arezzo and La Verna, that "harsh rock between Tiber and Arno," as Dante calls it, where the seraphic Patriarch "received from Christ the final seal." His wet nurse and foster-mother was the wife of a mason in the stone quarries of Settignano between Florence and Fiesole. "If there is anything good in me," he once said to his pupil and biographer, Vasari, "it comes from the pure air of your Arezzo hills where I was born, and perhaps also from the milk of my nurse with which I sucked in the chisels and hammers with which I used to carve my figures." As a boy he went to school in Florence, but as he showed an aptitude for drawing he was placed, in his thirteenth year, in the studio of Domenico Ghirlandaio.

Later at the wish of Lorenzo the Magnificent, he received training in the school of sculpture, then under the direction of Bertoldo, one of Donatello's pupils. In the Medici Garden famed for its antiques, Michelangelo beheld for the first time the magnificence of Greek art. As a student and resident of Via Larga, the Medici palace, Michelangelo lived with Lorenzo's sons in the most distinguished society of Florence, and there met the best painters and the foremost scholars of the day.

After the death of Lorenzo, Michelangelo spent some of his time at drawing in his own home, studying anatomy in the monastery of S. Spirito, and working in the residence of Pietro de' Medici. Going later to Bologna, he carved the beautiful kneeling angel with the candelabrum, on the shrine in the Church of S. Domenico. On his return to Florence from Bologna, in 1495, he found the gardens laid waste, the art treasures sold or scattered; his friends, Politian and Pica della Mirandola, "the phoenix of intellects," in their graves; and Savonarola still thundering forth his appeals for repentance and reform. But he found a patron in Botticelli's friend, Lorenzo di Pietro Francesco de' Medici, for whom he carved a "Sleeping Cupid" so beautifully that it was accepted as a piece of newly discovered ancient sculpture. Cardinal di San Giorgio, to whom the "Cupid" had been sold, pardoned the dealer's fraud in his delight at discovering so great an artist, and invited the young sculptor to Rome. Here Michelangelo spent the next five years, and to this period of his career belong his "Bacchus" of the Bargello, and his world-famed *Pieta* of S. Peter's. "The love and care which Michelangelo had given to this group," says Vasari, "were such that he left there his name — a thing he never did again for any work — on the cincture which girdles the robe of our Lady."

On his return to Florence about 1501, he undertook to execute a statue of the boy David from a huge block of marble upon which Simone da Fiesole

had worked unsuccessfully some years before. On January 25, 1504, eighteen leading residents of Florence, including Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Cosimo Rosselli, Filippino Lippi, Piero di Cosimo, and San Gallo, the architect, met to choose a site for the finished masterpiece. The "David" was eventually erected on the steps of the Palazzo Vecchio where it remained for three centuries.

In 1505 Pope Julius II called him to the Vatican, and after this Michelangelo was employed alternately in Rome and Florence by Julius and his imperious and changeable successors—Leo X, Clement VII, and Paul III. For Julius II he prepared designs for a gigantic monument the pope proposed to erect for his own tomb, which was to be one of the wonders of the world, but which was never completed; also a colossal bronze statue of his patron for the city of Bologna; and for the same pontiff he carried out the decoration of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. For Leo X, who had known him as a boy in the Medici Palace in Florence, but who greatly preferred Raphael to Leonardo da Vinci or himself, he worked more as an architect than as a painter, and at Florence rather than at Rome. The pope was unable fully to appreciate the true genius of the great artist; indeed, he is said to have told Sebastian del Piombo that Michelangelo was too terrible a man for him. For Clement VII, who treated him with more consideration than his predecessors, but whose plans were frustrated by the taking of Rome by the Imperial troops in 1527, he designed the Laurentian Library and the mortuary Chapel of S. Lorenzo in Florence, for which he executed the large statues of members of the Medici family and his world-renowned recumbent figures representing "Night," "Morning," "Dawn," and "Twilight." For Paul III, he acted as architect, sculptor, and painter to the Vatican. He began his famous fresco of "The Last Judgement" in his sixtieth year, designed the cupola of S. Peter's when he was seventy-two, and finished his not well-known Pauline Chapel frescoes when he was seventy-five years of age, remarking to Vasari that "fresco painting was not fit work for old men."

After the death of his father, in 1534, Michelangelo never again beheld the city of the Arno, although his body was borne back there for burial in the Church of S. Croce. So much did the Romans come to love the fiery old man who had passed the last three decades of his life in their midst, and who was building the new cupola of their beloved S. Peter's; so much did they consider him one of themselves, that preparations were being made for his burial in the SS. Apostoli, and his nephew was forced to remove his body secretly from the church and to set out with it by night on the last sad journey to Florence.

If Michelangelo's life was one of glorious achievements, it was also one of bitter disappointments. Sorrow is stamped on his face in Daniele da Volterra's bronze bust of him. He was ever filled with the consuming restlessness and driving discontent of genius; he always felt some great, overwhelming meaning in his inmost soul, which all his passionate, artistic yearnings were inadequate to express. He was never satisfied, as a lesser man would have been, with good work well and nobly done; he was the victim of his own insatiable desire, of his own absorbing ambition to achieve perfection in each and every work he undertook. He was, too, the sport of chance; the occasional prey of intriguers, and in many instances was compelled to bow his head to the whims of his capricious and powerful patrons. One of his earliest disappointments was the death of his first patron, Lorenzo de' Medici, which took place in his student days, for with the passing of "Il Magnifico" there passed away much of the glory of Florence. Other disappointments were the destruction of some of his works, notably, his great bronze figure of Julius II, by the Bolognese, who melted it down and actually used the metal thus obtained against the Papal troops. But Michelangelo's most bitter disappointment was what Condivi calls "the tragedy of the tomb," which dragged its cruel course through forty years. This elaborate monument was to have been Michelangelo's greatest achievement, but—through changes in the original designs, lack of funds, quarrels with his patron, the death of Julius himself, lack of interest in the project by the new pope and his successors—he was never permitted to finish it. Of the forty figures, types of the nations already brought to the feet of Christ, the winged victories, the colossal statues of Moses, S. Paul, and della Rovere himself, which were, according to the original scheme, to adorn this monument, only those now in the Louvre and the Baboli Gardens in Florence, and the frequently praised and frequently ridiculed seated "Moses," now in the Church of S. Pietro in Vincoli in Rome were executed. Michelangelo's forced neglect of this noble undertaking embittered his whole life. Of his "Moses" it is only fair to say that it cannot be judged properly in its present position. Its creator meant it to be at least twenty feet above our heads.

It is, however, of his work as a painter, not as an architect, sculptor, or man-of-letters, that we are to make mention in this book. And it is as a painter—although he frequently said he was not a painter—that Michelangelo has, according to the general consensus of opinion, bequeathed to mankind his greatest masterpieces. His paintings are few in number, and are to be found only in Rome, Florence, and London. In the Sistine Chapel we may see to this day his ceiling frescoes of "The Story of Creation," "The

Fall of Man," "The Deluge," and "The Brazen Serpent"; his "David and Goliath," "Judith," Prophets, Sybils, and the rest; and his vast west wall fresco of "The Last Judgement." In Rome also, in the Pauline Chapel, are preserved his last frescoes, "The Conversion of S. Paul," and "The Martyrdom of S. Peter." In the Uffizi he is represented by his "Holy Family" tondo, and in the National Gallery, London, by his unfinished "Deposition." Of these we shall discuss but the "Last Judgement" because it is so well known, and the "Holy Family" tondo because it is the only extant specimen of his work in oil.

From the time of Niccola Pisano up to that of Michelangelo, the fearful subject of the last judgement always had an irresistible attraction for the minds of the great artists of the Renaissance, who vied with one another in their endeavour to portray with equal vividness the joys of the saved and the torments of the damned. They endeavoured to depict in their art the scenes which Dante in his *Divina Commedia*, and Thomas of Celano in his *Dies Irae* had so finally interpreted. Striving to represent the frantic despair of the lost at the sudden realisation of their dreadful state, they painted scenes whose horror and dreadfulness cause the spectator to turn away with a shudder. Of such are scenes from the "Last Judgement" by Signorelli in Orvieto or by Michelangelo in Rome. And yet this judgement is an act which God is still to perform.

According to the greatest theologians "The Day of the Lord" will consist in four manifestations of God's omnipotence: there will be the destruction of the physical world; the resurrection of the dead; the revelation of all hidden things of man's conscience and God's providence; and lastly, the separation of the good from the wicked. It is evident that no pictorial presentment, however great, could give any adequate idea of so vast a change of all things. The great ideas of the Scriptures are still the most potent and satisfying expressions. Any attempt to depict the last judgement will always end in miserable failure, and Michelangelo failed as ignominiously as Giotto or Orcagna, or Fra Bartolommeo failed in their attempts to depict this ending of the world. To assert that he did not is to contend that the aim of art is to exhibit the nakedness of man, the contortion of limbs, the agonies of emotion, and the perfection of the muscularity of the human body instead of the majesty of man made in the image of God.

When we last stood in the Sistine Chapel before "The Last Judgement," which is an awe-inspiring, sombre, and dreadful production, there came to mind the sestet of Lord Alfred Douglas' noble, but not well-known, sonnet "To Shakespeare":

"For now thy praises have become too loud
On vulgar lips, and every yelping cur
Yaps thee a paean; the whiles little men
Not tall enough to worship in a crowd
Spit their small wits at thee. . . ."

and with these lines the thought that, when we should attempt to express an opinion of Michelangelo as a painter, we might be accused of "spitting our small wits" at him. Although Michelangelo has been more highly praised than any artist who has ever lived, we cannot in truth join the endless chorus of praise. Of the "Last Judgement" fresco—which is so mistakenly considered Michelangelo's greatest work—everything possible, and impossible, seems to have been said during the last three and one half centuries. Nevertheless, we must say it is our view that, while painting "The Last Judgement"—when over sixty years of age, thirteen years after the death of Raphael—Michelangelo allowed himself to become so obsessed by the words he himself had written: "God has nowhere revealed himself more fully than in the sublime beauty of the human form," and by the belief that the most complete rendering of life and movement could only be attained by means of the nude, that he disregarded the true relation of the human body to the soul. Michelangelo has supplanted Angelico's supernaturalism with a naturalism of his own. The treasured paintings of the great Dominican bring to our lips the words "simplicity and faith," the famous paintings of the greatest Florentine evoke "masculine virility and muscular strength." And as we repeat them, we are tempted to ask ourselves whether Christian art may not have suffered, when it consented to take its inspiration from no higher source than that which moved the genius of the Greek artists in the delineation of pagan divinities, and when nature was made the standard of ideals that were *above* nature?

The idea and even attributes of the principal figures of Michelangelo's "Last Judgement" are taken from Andrea Orcagna's old painting in the Campo Santo, but with all his genius, ability, technical dexterity, and other advantages Michelangelo did not in any way improve on the original idea. His Christ is more like a thunderbolt-hurling Jove coming to destroy, rather than the Saviour of the world coming to judge mankind. His Blessed Virgin shrinks affrightened behind her huge, muscular-torsoed Son, and surely Mary never was, and never will be, even on general judgement day, afraid of the Child she bore in Bethlehem! His blessed lack the look of ineffable happiness which Fra Angelico would have conveyed. Because the Dominican

painter lived a quiet and sheltered life in which the sorrows, the cares, and the passions of the world were unknown to him, he depicted with great success, the joys of the angels and saints in heaven. But Michelangelo, familiarised by a long apprenticeship with pain and sorrow and disappointments, could far better depict them than a joy which he could not even approach with his imagination. The chief excellence of his "Last Judgement" is, therefore, his depiction of those who are to be banished forever from the sight of God. Time, and the decorator's hand and the restorer's brush have been busy with this fresco which measures about sixty-six feet in height, and thirty-three feet in width, and is still the largest and most comprehensive painting in the world.

Michelangelo's "Holy Family" tondo is rightly regarded as one of the glories of the Uffizi. The gallery obtained possession of it as early as 1635. It is the only easel painting, and the one and only oil painting by Michelangelo that the world possesses to-day. Painted in 1504 for the marriage of Angelo Doni to Maddalena Strozzi, it is a singularly powerful and original work, characteristic alike of Michelangelo's defects and qualities. The Blessed Virgin, who is represented as a strong, lithe, sinewy, Tuscan woman, is shown in the act of turning round to receive her Divine Child from S. Joseph. Behind a low wall or parapet the young S. John the Baptist is seen gazing up at Mary's Son; and five nude youths are introduced against a balustrade in the background. It would seem that in his tondo Michelangelo deliberately set himself a hard task, that he made everything difficult and attempted nothing that did not require accurate knowledge and accurate treatment. The Blessed Virgin's body is admirably foreshortened, her arms are in action, not in repose; and she kneels and turns in complicated movements, which give a twist to her body that foreshadows the complicated S-like figure, the *figura serpentinata* which became typical of the Mannerist attitudes. But, while we acknowledge Michelangelo's cleverness and his consummate artistry, we must write that, in this tondo, the Mother of God looks more as if she were hewn out of stone than painted with a brush. There is not a particle of Raphael's charm or Leonardo's suavity, or a soft line, or the faintest trace of devotional feeling in the whole composition. The nude figures in the background of this tondo have led to much discussion. They were, we know, prototypes of the genii of the Sistine ceiling frescoes; but they are said by some to represent the Hebrew prophets, and by others to represent the old pagan divinities — pushed into the background, as the conquered always are — whose places have been taken in the hearts of men by the founder of Christianity. Of Michelangelo's unfinished "Deposition" and

his Pauline Chapel frescoes little need be said. The authenticity of the first named has been repeatedly questioned, and when we say of the second that they are the work of a man seventy-five years old, it will not be wondered at that they lack the animation, the life, and the fire of the best panels of the Sistine ceiling.

Fully cognisant of Michelangelo's place in the history of painting and sincerely appreciative of his unique genius, yet we need must consider him a greater artist as a sculptor and architect than as a painter. These are five of our reasons. *First* of all, from his boyhood days in Ghirlandaio's studio, Michelangelo evinced little or no inclination for painting. Outstanding as he later became in all fields of art, to be a master sculptor was always the aim of his artistic ambition. To prove this assertion, we have but to recall the fact that while he strove ceaselessly to obtain permission to execute the sculptures for the tomb of Julius, he went so far as to recommend his competitor and rival, Raphael, to Pope Julius in an attempt to escape the task of painting the Sistine ceiling frescoes. In documents relating to his works and in his letters he always described himself as "I, Michelangelo the sculptor." Surely, the artist's own words are an additional argument peculiarly significant and cogent. *Second*, he cannot be regarded as a painter in the sense in which we regard Raphael, Leonardo, or Fra Bartolommeo as painters. He cared little for colour; love, tenderness, and beauty are, we might almost say, entirely absent from his frescoes; and no one can deny Fuseli's criticism of his work, that his women were female men and his children diminutive giants. *Third*, his Sistine ceiling frescoes (which he painted under protest, stating that he was a sculptor and not a painter) are merely parts of a scheme of decoration of an elaborate architectural construction—almost too vast in plan and treatment to be assimilated—leaving room for only one row of nine panels down the centre of the vault for paintings. These panels, in fact, are comparatively small, when the area of the entablature, trusses, vertical pilasters, and other architectural features are taken into consideration. *Fourth*, Michelangelo frequently spoke—and, we are convinced, always thought—in terms of sculpture. His Sybils and Prophets are, for example, hard to distinguish from sculptural bas-reliefs; and if we admit that his ceiling frescoes constitute a solemn and impressive ensemble, we must also in fairness admit that ensemble is an architect's and a sculptor's as well as a painter's triumph. And, *lastly*, we believe he was a greater artist as a sculptor and as an architect than he was as a painter, because his power and delight lay in mastery of form and in the assertion through that mastery of the idealism of genius. Michelangelo was, therefore, in our humble opinion, a great sculptor, who



Michelangelo

CREATION OF MAN



THE EXPULSION FROM PARADISE (Detail) *Michelangelo*



THE LAST JUDGEMENT (Detail)

Michelangelo



THE HOLY FAMILY

Michelangelo

happened to be able to paint. One who painted nobly and one who in the sublimity of some of his conceptions and his unparalleled power of draughtsmanship surpassed all his predecessors and contemporaries, but one who exercised his talents in this sphere of art always half against his will, never from inclination, and only when he was commissioned, nay, one might almost say, commanded, to do so by patrons so powerful and despotic that he dared not offend them by refusing to carry out their wishes.

Never had the Church a more faithful son than Michelangelo. The teachings of the Platonist scholars, his early study of the antiques, and the pagan art of the Florence of his youth may have influenced some of his ideas—he became the creator of a new and original style; but he clung fast to the traditions of the Middle Ages and preserved to the last the simple faith of the early Tuscan sculptors. "Because the beauty of the world is always fragile and deceitful" he wrote, "I seek to attain the Eternal and Universal Beauty." When past his eightieth year, he wrote again: "Neither painting nor sculpture can any longer bring peace to the soul that seeks the Divine Love which opened its arms on the cross to receive us." On his deathbed, at sunset, February 18, 1564, he begged his friends, when their last hour came, to do as he was then doing, "to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ."

If Michelangelo did not, like Fra Angelico, go down on his knees when painting the image of Christ, his faith was as simple, as pure, and as strong as the gifted Dominican's. He told the sculptor, Ammanati, that "good Christians always make good and beautiful figures. In order to represent the adored image of our Lord, it is not enough that a master should be great and able. I maintain that he must also be a man of good morals and conduct, if possible a saint, in order that the Holy Ghost may give him inspiration." And thus lived and died the artist who terminated the marvellous cycle of Florentine art, which had been begun by Giotto; the artist who represented, nay, dominated the whole of the sixteenth century; the artist to whom Sir Joshua Reynolds gave the title of "the Homer of Painting"; the artist of whom it was written: "When Michelangelo died Galileo was born, and science advanced to take the place of art."

The friend of popes and cardinals, kings and princes, and of the greatest artists and litterateurs of his day, Michelangelo was, like most truly great men, a man of simple habits. He lived frugally, frequently dining off a crust of bread while at work, and he slept little, often going to bed without removing his clothes or his boots. Savonarola's sermons which he always remembered, and the seriousness of his own fine mind, which warned him

of being solicitous for the things of this earth, probably urged him to adopt this austere mode of living. He worked almost continuously; and, to be able to work by night, he fashioned for himself a cardboard helmet, in the top of which he could fasten a candle and thus carry about a light, leaving both hands free for work. Although he is dead nearly four centuries, the Italian carvers and masons we bring from Carrara or Pietrasanta to erect marble altars in the churches we design in Ireland to-day, are still to be seen—before beginning their day's work—fashioning for themselves square, biretta-like, paper caps, in imitation or in memory of their great compatriot.

Michelangelo's sculptures, not his paintings, are his greatest works, but, his manifold activities proclaim him one of the most vigorous artists and greatest geniuses of all time.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

NORTH ITALIAN ART

The Schools of Padua, Verona, Ferrara, Bologna, and Parma

PADUA

WHILE the painters of Florence, Siena, and Umbria were working for the advancement of art, it must not be supposed that the artists of other Italian cities were idle. In the northern cities of Padua, Verona, Ferrara, Bologna, and Parma, schools of far-reaching fame and influence were originating and growing. Even though the scope of this book does not permit extensive discussion of these schools, some few words concerning each school and its eminent personalities must need be written. This because these schools and their artists formed part of and greatly influenced the School of Venice in its formation, direction, and tendencies.

But before we discuss North Italian art, something should be said about the Renaissance because of its widespread influence at this time. The Renaissance, so often connected with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, was not simply the result of an event which led to the emigration of a large number of Greeks to Italy. No doubt it received a powerful and visible impulse from this occurrence, but it was in full progress before. The literary movement "is anterior by more than a century to the great event which is assigned as its date," says Christophe, "and it is impossible to deny that there was a strong taste for antiquity during the period of the sojourn of the popes at Avignon." In regard to the inward character of the Renaissance, it was essentially humanistic or naturalistic, and in this it was a revolt against Christianity. It despised asceticism and restrictions of all kinds; it was virtually a return to pure Greek paganism; it was heathen and not Christian. It knew little of grace, it had no genuine sympathy, for example, with rational liberty being the right of all men, and a benefit to humanity at

large. It was much more in sympathy with cruel, if cultivated, tyrants than with their defenceless, if uncultivated, victims.

The early foundation of the University of Padua was one of the most important features of the history of northern Italy from the Middle Ages to the end of the late Renaissance. In 1360 Pope Urban V bestowed on the university the right of conferring theological degrees, a right which was previously granted only to Paris and later to Bologna. Indeed, it would be impossible here to give the names of even the greatest of the theologians, philosophers, and men of science and letters, who taught in the university, or the names of the saints and beati, the cardinals, and Polish kings, and other historical figures who have studied within its halls. The geographical and political situation of Padua, her dependence on Venice which kept up a continual intercourse with Constantinople, the presence of a large number of foreign students from all parts of Europe within her university, and the long residence of Petrarch himself in the city, at a time when Europe was awakening to the new ideals of the Renaissance, all contributed to render the old university town the real seat of North Italian Humanism. Culture and learning, therefore, not simple faith and love of God, became the inspiring motives of Paduan art.

In the history of art of this period there exists no stranger figure than that of the vestmaker and embroiderer of Padua, FRANCESCO SQUARCIONE (1394-1474), a notary's son, who was, it may be said, the first to raise the art of his native city out of obscurity, and who has some claim to be regarded — although he was at best a mediocre artist — as the father of the early Paduan School. We know little about Squarcione, but he must have been a shrewd and astute man with a keen eye to the trend of the times. When the gossip of the scholars and students, who daily thronged the streets of the old university city, reached his ears, when he heard talk of the New Learning, for which the University of Padua became renowned, of the awakening interest in ancient lore, and of the beauty of Greek and Roman art, he speedily came to the conclusion that a statue, a fragment of sculpture, or an antique cast would bring more and wealthier patrons to his establishment than would the most artistically arranged display of delicately embroidered doublets. So gradually, the tailor's shop was metamorphosed: it became an antique gallery.

Squarcione, we are told, set out on his travels and brought back to Padua a collection of antique art treasures and drawings of ancient works of sculpture and architecture. When students sought his gallery to examine and draw his models and casts, he induced them to become bound to him as his appren-

tices, and he thus — on the strength of *their* work — founded a lucrative art business. Be this story true or false, and “although not the best of painters himself,” Squarcione managed to qualify for admission to the Guild of Painters of Padua, in 1441, being then in his forty-seventh year.

Giotto had painted his frescoes on the walls of the Arena Chapel and inspired the first local painter, Altichiero Altichieri. Umbrian influences had later reached Paduan artists through Gentile da Fabriano; but the prolonged visit of the great Donatello to the university city gave direction and the greatest impetus to Paduan art. Donatello, while being a scholar of the antique, was a keen student of nature, and his well-balanced mind helped to counteract the tendencies of an art nurtured in an atmosphere of Humanistic learning and based too closely on the study of Roman relief sculpture. So far Paduan art was merely copying Giottesque or Umbrian originals. It was not till Andrea, son of Biagio, known to fame as Andrea Mantegna, entered Squarcione’s shop (or gallery, or studio, call it what you will) that Padua produced the most important master of its school.

ANDREA MANTEGNA (1431–1506) was born at Isola di Carturo, near Vicenza. At an early age he went to Padua, where he entered the studio of Francesco Squarcione. Mantegna was Squarcione’s most brilliant pupil and was adopted as his son. Andrea’s name was entered on the registers of the Paduan School as such in 1441. In 1454 he painted the Ancona for the Church of S. Giustina of Padua, and probably between 1448 and 1455 he did the frescoes of the Church of the Eremitani friars. These works established his fame and show a steady development in his manner. The frescoes in question were a portion of the work assigned to Mantegna by Squarcione, who had contracted to decorate the church for the Ovetari family. Jacopo Bellini, the father of Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, the real founder of the great Venetian School, had become associated with Squarcione, and it is thought that the young Mantegna learned his colouring from Jacopo Bellini and his draughtsmanship from drawing the Greek statues among Squarcione’s antiques.

In 1454, Andrea married Jacopo’s daughter, an event which, according to Vasari, brought about the severance of his connexion with Squarcione. Five years later he painted his famous S. Zeno “Madonna with Saints,” one of the finest religious pictures that ever came from his hands. In the same year, he settled in Mantua where, save for the intervals of his visits to Florence and Rome, he resided till his death. It was in 1466 that he visited Florence, where he was highly esteemed. “Not only in painting,” according to a letter of the period, “but in other ways he showed remarkable knowledge and

most excellent understanding." Between 1470 and 1474 he painted the Camera degli Sposi frescoes; and in 1495, his "Madonna" for the Duchess of Ferrara, and began his "Triumph of Julius Caesar" which he completed in 1492. While engaged on the first pieces of the "Triumph," Andrea was invited to Rome by Pope Innocent VIII to decorate his newly erected Belvedere Chapel. Here he spent some two years, but the frescoes were later destroyed by the enlargement of the Vatican museum. In the last decade of his life Mantegna painted his "Madonna della Vittoria," which was carried off in triumph by the French, three hundred years later, to Paris where it may now be seen in the Louvre; also his altar-piece for Santa Maria in Organo at Verona; his "S. Sebastian," "The Triumph of Scipio," and in the same year he designed a monument to Virgil. He died in Mantua in 1506.

In such a few sentences are the main outlines of Andrea Mantegna's life, but an entire volume would need to be written to record, even briefly, the effects of his work on the art of his own and succeeding ages. To speak of non-Italian artists first, Colvin has pointed out how much the great Albrecht Dürer learned from Mantegna in the delineation of passionate movement. Holbein, we know, availed himself, in his works at Basle and Lucerne, of episodes of the "Triumph," which he knew from Andrea's own engravings. A portfolio of these same engravings was among the cherished possessions of Rembrandt, and Rubens visited Mantua to study the great Paduan's works. But leaving the leaders of the German and other schools, and passing over the contemporary art of other small Italian schools like those of Ferrara, Vicenza, and Verona, and coming to the culminating period of the Renaissance, we find, to give but one example, Raphael himself taking Mantegna as his model in more than one instance. The likeness of the boy-angels of the frescoes of the Camera degli Sposi to the cherubs of the world famous "Madonna di San Sisto" has been frequently commented upon, and in the bearers of the dead Christ, who walk backwards in the Borghese "Entombment," there is a distinct reminiscence of the Paduan master's work.

We have spoken here of Mantegna as a religious painter, and if as such he has his faults, they are due primarily to that passion for the antique, which was a legacy of his youthful association with Squarcone, and which towards the end of his career made him increasingly ready to sacrifice the pictorial qualities of his art to the imitation of the effect of Graeco-Roman relief sculpture. The paganism of his "Parnassus" in the Louvre illustrates the great change that had come over Italian art, owing to the spreading revival of interest in the achievements of ancient Greece and Rome. Indeed, in some

of his paintings we seem to be able to discern the grim struggle between Catholic and pagan principles actually taking place. But it was his intensive study of classical models that gave him that knowledge of the human form in which few have ever surpassed him.

If some of Mantegna's early religious pictures, for example, his "Agony in the Garden," in the National Gallery, London, give one the impression that they have been hewed rather than painted, and if his monochrome of "The Dead Christ" in the Brera—the ugliness of which is not atoned for by the cleverness of its perspective—makes us wonder if he merely painted it to show how far he could excel Uccello in foreshortening, we must admit that his "Madonna and Child with S. John the Baptist and S. Mary Magdalene," one of the treasures of the National Gallery, is irreproachably drawn and modelled, of subdued but variegated colour, painted in the broad manner of his maturity, and showing how carefully the Paduan studied both nature and art. How far we have come from Cimabue and his oriental-eyed Madonnas, flat on golden backgrounds, to this shy, sweet Virgin modestly holding up her Divine Son for all men to see! The figures of S. John the Baptist and S. Mary Magdalene supporting the Blessed Virgin, who sits on a red-draped, high-backed seat, are dignified, anatomically perfect, and suitably clothed. S. John is lightly clad and Magdalene is richly robed, but we are never given the impression that this is done to give Mantegna an opportunity of displaying his technique in draperies.

An innovator to the last, in his picture, painted at Mantua, towards the end of his life, he gave us one of the earliest representations in art of the Divine Infant in statuesque form. He was imitated by Cosimo Tura and many Ferrarese painters; by Bartolommeo Montagna of Vicenza; by many of the masters of Verona; by the Vivarini, the Bellini, and Carlo Crivelli, and thus he profoundly influenced Venetian art. Even as Orcagna may be said to stand half-way between Giotto and Fra Angelico in the development of Florentine art, so Andrea Mantegna may be said to occupy the foremost place among the artists of the mid-Renaissance, and to stand midway between Giotto and Michelangelo in the development of Renaissance art as a whole.

VERONA

The first Veronese painter of importance was ALTICHIERO (c. 1320–c. 1385), born at Zevio, a village near Verona. Vasari informs us that he painted the "Siege of Jerusalem by Titus," after Josephus, in the hall of the Palace of Verona, and other great works. His friend, Jacopo d'Avanzi, assisted him

in the frescoes at Padua, but these painters and two others, greatly inspired by Giotto, namely Martini and Pietro Paolo de' Capelli, prepared the way for the far greater Vittore Pisano.

PISANELLO as he was called was born at S. Vigilio, near the Lake of Garda about 1380, and died in 1455. He was one of the most remarkable and original painters of this active period, and was, contemporaneously with Squarcione of Padua—although independent of both him and the stern Andrea Mantegna, one of the founders of the fifteenth-century style of painting. The name of his master is not known; Vasari's statement that he studied under Andrea del Castagno is no longer credited; Morelli suggests Paolo Uccello as his master. However, the greatest are in agreement that the source of his art was Florentine, and that, wherever he studied, he appears to have settled early in life in Verona. He was the friend of Gentile da Fabriano and worked with him on the decoration of the Ducal Palace in Venice, and doubtless owes to his associate some of his fine feeling for finish, colour, and brilliancy. He completed the series of pictures begun by Gentile in S. John Lateran.

Very few, probably not more than half-a-dozen of Pisanello pictures are preserved. A painting by him remains in the Church of S. Fermo Maggiore in Verona. Two other works, the authenticity of which are unquestioned, are in the National Gallery, London. The first of these: "The Vision of S. Eustace" is a marvellous piece of work for the epoch in which it was painted, displaying as it does Pisanello's accuracy of observation and his attention to the smallest detail of every animal, bird, rock, tree, or flower with which he has crowded his picture of the dark forest clearing in which S. Eustace encounters the stag displaying between its antlers the image of the crucified Christ. The face of S. George in "The Madonna and Child in Glory with S. Anthony the Hermit and S. George," the second of the two Pisanello's in the National Gallery, is so beautifully and delicately modelled that it is obviously the work of a sculptor. The elaborate shining armour is also drawn with precision and the sword and spurs are richly chased. Unfortunately this picture had to be restored by Molteni of Milan, and it is difficult, when comparing it with the S. Eustace picture, to appreciate the contrasting flesh colours. Pisanello is also famous as a medallist, and the custom of the noble houses of his age to have medals struck to commemorate important events in their families, is responsible for the gallery of contemporary portraits we possess to-day in the great museums and galleries of Europe, priceless to the student of Renaissance history.

Pisanello was followed by STEFANO DA ZEVIO (1393-1451), some of whose





MARY WITHIN THE ROSEHEDGE

Stefano da Zevio



AUTUMN

Francesco Cossa



S. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

Francia

frescoes may still be seen in the churches of S. Anastasia; in the little church of S. Giovanni in Valle, founded in the fifth century; in the thirteenth-century Gothic church of S. Eufemia; and in the Gallery in Verona. Next came Domenico Marone and his son and a gradually developing and improving group of painters among whom were Girolamo dai Libri and Paolo Morando, called Cavazzola, pupils of Marone's; and Liberale da Verona and his pupils: Caroto, Giolfino, Torbido, and Bonsignori. The elder Marone and Liberale and their respective pupils and followers formed two distinct groups in Quattrocento Veronese art: Domenico Marone being a strict follower of Andrea Mantegna and his new imagery and new attitudes, and Liberale guiding those who strove so successfully to compromise between the old and the more advanced style of painting. Francesco Marone (1473-1529) is a painter whose works bear the impress of deep religious feeling as do those of dai Libri and Morando. All three are best studied in Verona in the Municipal Gallery or in the churches where many of their paintings are preserved.

GIROLAMO DAI LIBRI (1474-1556) worked with the younger Marone on the frescoes in S. Maria in Organo. He is an excellent draughtsman, a fine colourist, and his pictures are remarkable for the symmetry and balance of their grouping. He is also a painter whose work will repay careful study and one to whom the majority of critics have not paid sufficient attention. His pictures abound in beautiful landscapes, with trees, fruit, flowers, and foliage-hidden trellis-work. The little groups of choring angels at the base of some of his "Madonna and Saints" pictures, notably in that in the Church of S. George in Braida, and in his "Virgin and Child with S. Anne" in the National Gallery, London, are as charmingly grouped and as interesting as the chief characters he portrays so feelingly in these paintings.

Paolo Morando (1486-1522), better known as CAVAZZOLA, was born in Verona and is in many ways distinct from Girolamo dai Libri. He died at the early age of thirty-six and his contemporaries frequently referred to him as the "Raphael of Verona." As a colourist he is cold and hard but his drawing is vigorous. A truly magnificent and Raphaelesque conception is his "Madonna and Child with Saints in Glory," with the saints grouped easily on either side to permit the painting in of an undulating landscape background. His subjects from the Passion of our Lord are to be seen in the Verona Gallery, and the most striking of the five are "The Deposition," with its background of the heights of Verona, showing the Castle of S. Pietro and the Adige below. A self-portrait of Cavazzola is to be seen at the left of the cross.

Of Liberale's pupils the best known are Bonsignori and Caroto. FRANCESCO DI ALBERTO BONSIGNORI (1455-1519) was born in Verona and studied first under unknown Veronese masters, came to Venice, about 1487, and worked under Bartolommeo and Alvise Vivarini. His early style is reminiscent of their work and that of Bartolommeo Montagna, but he later came under the influence of Andrea Mantegna and, towards the end of his career, acquired a softness of colour from his study of the works of Lorenzo Costa. One of his earliest dated works is "The Madonna with the Sleeping Child," now in the Verona Gallery. But what is believed to be his earliest painting extant is his "Madonna with SS. Anthony and Mary Magdalene," in the Church of S. Paolo, Verona; another is a fresco over a small door leading into the Torriani Chapel in S. Fermo Maggiore. Bonsignori was employed by the Gonzaga family at Mantua in the decoration of their new palace and in the Church of S. Francesco. The Marquis Francesco Gonzaga gave him a dwelling house and retained his services at a yearly salary until his death. His "Venetian Senator," in the National Gallery, London, is a strong and vigorous portrait of an old man, but his best portrait is perhaps that of "Vespiano Gonzaga." Bonsignori painted in tempera and also in oil; he painted historical and devotional pictures and architectural and animal studies so well that he came to be called "The Modern Zeuxis." His "S. Louis" and his "S. Sebastian" are in the Brera, Milan, his "Christ Carrying the Cross" in the Doria Gallery, Rome, and other works from his hand are to be seen in the galleries and churches of Mantua and Verona. Bonsignori had four brothers one of whom became the master of one of the greatest painters Verona ever produced—Paolo Veronese.

GIOVANNI FRANCESCO CAROTO (1470-1546) was first apprenticed to Liberale da Verona but afterwards painted with Mantegna in Mantua. He is a forcible and at times a graceful painter recalling Bernardino Luini. "The student of the early works of Caroto in the galleries of Modena, and Frankfurt," says Morelli, "will admit that these small Madonnas of his in drawing and modelling recall quite as much his master, Liberale, as Mantegna." His colouring is warm, soft, and harmonious, and his drawing vigorous. An excellent example of his style is the famous Uffizi portrait of Elizabeth Gonzaga, wife of Guidobaldo I, Duke of Urbino, one of the most remarkable women of the Italian Renaissance, who shared with her husband and her father-in-law, Federico, that love of art and letters which made the court of Urbino famed throughout Europe. This unique, strictly symmetrical portrait was originally catalogued as a work by Mantegna; Crowe and Cavalcaselle ascribed it to Bonsignori, Burckhardt to Lorenzo Costa, but Morelli—

whose opinion is endorsed by Berenson — has assigned it to Caroto. Morelli also restored to Caroto the Dresden "Madonna and Child with Angels Carrying Large Lilies," which was sent to that gallery as a painting by Leonardo da Vinci, and which Selwyn Brinton considers "one of the loveliest paintings which all Italian art has bequeathed to us." The greater part of his paintings are in the churches and the Gallery of Verona, but some examples of his work are to be seen in Modena, Padua, and London. A "Madonna and Child with S. John the Baptist," officially catalogued in the Louvre under the name of Girolamo, is now held to be by Caroto. His works are so varied in style that they have led to endless disputes, and he has been called "the Proteus of Veronese painters." Vasari held he was the first Veronese who excelled in landscape painting, but this statement like many of the same author's is open to question.

Speaking of the painters of Verona, Layard says: "No school in Italy, except the Florentine, shows so regular and uninterrupted a development, and none is consequently more deserving of the attention of the student who seeks in art a phase of the human intellect, influenced by local and special circumstances." The School of Verona became merged into the Venetian School in the early part of the sixteenth century.

FERRARA

Goethe compared Ferrara with Florence, and gave the palm to the city on the banks of the Po, for he was of the opinion that Ferrara represented more completely than any other city the peculiar culture of the Italian Renaissance, which drew its inspiration from the princelings who ruled the little city-states of mediaeval Italy, and from the scholars and artists attracted to their capitals and dependent on their patronage. The Ferrarese School of painting budded under the rule of the Marquis Leonello, and flourished and blossomed under the Marquis Borso, the first Duke of Modena and Reggio, who was later created Duke of Ferrara. It produced Cosimo Tura, Francesco del Cossa, Ercole de' Roberti, Lorenzo Costa, Giovanni Luteri, called Dosso Dossi, and other painters of note if not of the first rank. Leonello d'Este is said to have surpassed all the princes of his time by the brightness of his learning; he reorganized the university, which had been languishing since its foundation in 1391; and a constant succession of great men of letters enjoyed the hospitality of his court. With the dawn of learning came the rebirth of the fine arts; and the rise of the Ferrarese School of painting in the middle of the fifteenth century is of no little importance and significance in the evolution of Venetian art. The impetus it received was greatly encour-

aged by the presence at the court of Ferrara of Pisanello, who worked there between 1427 and 1447, Jacopo Bellini, and the Fleming, Roger van der Weyden.

Ferrarese painting may be said to have begun with COSIMO TURA (1430-1495), the son of a shoemaker. Tura, who is frequently referred to as "The Mantegna of Ferrara," is believed to have been a pupil of Gelasso Gelassi or of Squarcione, and to have studied Mantegna's frescoes in the Church of the Eremitani friars at Padua. There is little doubt that he came under the influence of Piero della Francesca, who worked for Borso d'Este in Ferrara, and of Donatello, who had completed in Padua his great statue of Gattamelata. Tura returned to Ferrara in 1456 and was appointed court painter in the following year. Between 1465 and 1467 he worked for Gian Francesco Pico, Count of Concorida, painting the library of the palace of Mirandola for that nobleman with images of poetry and the sybils, the nine Muses dancing and holding out crowns to Orpheus, Hesiod, and Virgil; but like other decorative schemes carried out by Ferrarese painters these works have perished. Perished, too, his decorations of Borso's chapel in Belriguardo, in connexion with which the Duke sent him to study the chapel in Broletto in Venice, newly finished by Gentile da Fabriano. In 1475 Tura painted an ancona for the new Duke's private room, parts of which are to-day to be found in Bergamo, Florence, Paris, and Berlin. Between 1477 and 1491 he painted many portraits, but with the solitary exception of his portrait of Lorenzo Roverella, all are lost. He died in his sixty-fourth or sixty-fifth year. A Ferrarese chronicler of the early sixteenth century writes: "In the month of April, 1495, died the noble and excellent man, Maestro Cosimo da Tura, a most excellent painter. He was buried at S. Lorenzo across the Po, in a tomb near the door of the campanile of that church." Tura founded a line of painters, which flourished not only in Ferrara but throughout all the dominions ruled by the house of Este and the adjacent country from Cremona to Bologna.

Tura recalls Mantegna and Piero della Francesca in his use of perspective, his treatment of architecture, and his extravagance of gesture; but, with what he learnt from these masters and his own innate talent, he gradually evolved a strangely harsh and severe style which he impressed enduringly on the art of his native city.¹ His "Madonna and Child Enthroned with Angels," one of three of his works in the National Gallery, London, may be taken as a characteristic example of his work. It is interesting for at least two reasons: the first is that it may be regarded as a sort of battleground of beliefs, showing more clearly than any painting we can recall, the clashing of Christian

and pagan tendencies; the second is that in it we can see the peculiar idiosyncrasies of Tura's style: his baroque exuberance of architectural decoration, violent contrasts of colour, sharp and angular drapery folds, and his vigorous but unlovely types. The Blessed Virgin and the Divine Child are both ugly; the halos on the heads of the angels attending our Lady are like flat circular slabs; and the fantastically designed and ornamented throne on which she sits, in an affected manner, is more than extravagantly crowned with, among other things, the symbols of the four Evangelists. In this picture, in his attempt to connect the Christian religion with pagan mythology — Tura was unkind to both. We, in turn, would be unkind to him, if we dared to compare his unlovely Madonna to the chaste and beautiful S. Zaccaria, Castelfranco, and Ansidei Madonnas of Bellini, Giorgione, and Raphael.

His "S. Jerome in the Desert" is a much more ably executed picture. The face, torso, arms, hands, and feet of the saint, depicted in a dignified kneeling position, are carefully drawn, and here again we see the sharp almost tortured folds of the drapery. His "Dominican Friar," in the Uffizi, is another excellent sample of this artist's style and peculiar mannerisms, with its grim, stern, forbidding face, and lean, talon-like fingers with knotty knuckles. This picture is catalogued as "S. Dominic," but, while we do not profess to know who is responsible for the picture's title, we are quite certain it is anything but a likeness of the founder of the Dominican Order. There are several representations of Dominic extant: three at Bologna and one at Gaeta; but the best authenticated portrait of him is preserved in the Church of S. Domenico Maggiore, in Naples. This portrait is painted on wood over a surface of gesso, and shows a face rather Spanish in appearance, with the short beard which we are told he allowed to grow so as to be able to journey to the Tartars, and it shows that complete tonsure of which other records assure us. It resembles the description of the saint dictated by one of the nuns whom Dominic had transferred from the Trastevere Convent to S. Sisto, in which she states: ". . . his hair and beard very fair — his hands long and beautiful — he never became bald, and always retained his perfect tonsure . . ."; and Theodoric of Apoldia, writing in 1288, carries on the same tradition stating that Dominic's hair was fair and his beard rather tending to red; he notes, too, his "slender and beautiful hands" and his "perfect tonsure with few white hairs." The portrait in the Uffizi is clean-shaven, and is that of an old man long past his prime, whereas S. Dominic died at the comparatively early age of fifty-one. Surely, the Uffizi painting cannot be the founder of the Dominican Order.

FRANCESCO COSSA (1435-1477) was a contemporary of Tura, and was like Tura a pupil of Gelassi. What is probably his best painting is in the gallery at Bologna, his "Madonna and Child with SS. Petronius and John and a Kneeling Donor." Another good example of his work is his "S. Hyacinth, Dominican" in the National Gallery, London, which is the central panel of an altar-piece, the predella of which is in the Vatican Gallery and the wings in the Brera, Milan. But a greater Ferrarese artist than Tura, Cossa, Ercole de'Roberti, or Lorenzo Costa was Giovanni Lutero, called Dosso Dossi.

Dosso Dossi (1479-1541) has been called "the most imaginative of the Italian painters of the Cinquecento." He is said to have been a pupil of Lorenzo da Costa; and to have spent some five years in Venice, where he was impressed by the art of Giorgione and of Titian. His art is by some critics described as irresponsible, faunish, and fantastic. He was certainly an innovator, witness his Hampton Court "Holy Family with S. Elizabeth," probably painted at Mantua in 1512, in which he represents the Blessed Virgin as a handsome, worldly lady with golden-auburn hair, dressed in the height of fashion in robe and bodice the sleeves of which are rose-pink! A contemporary and friend of Ariosto (who sang his praises with the greatest Italian painters of the day in *Orlando Furioso*), he was, like the poet, imbued with a spirit of fantastic romance, which found expression in his well-known "Circe" of the Borghese Gallery, Rome; his "A Merry Party" in the Pitti Palace, Florence; and his "A Muse Instructing a Court Poet" in the National Gallery, London.

Although his draughtsmanship is not always faultless, Dossi mastered much of the subtlety of Venetian colouring, and the mysterious effects of light and shade, and is regarded as the forerunner of Correggio, whom he met in Mantua in 1511. Berenson is of the opinion that it was from Dosso Dossi that Correggio "got the impulse for that study of the effect of light, which in itself became in his hands a means of expression utterly undreamed of before." In the Gallery at Ferrara there is an altar-piece of Dosso's, a "Madonna and Child with Saints," which has suffered in the process of repainting, but which must once have been a glorious work; also his "S. John the Evangelist in Patmos" and an "Annunciation."

BOLOGNA

From the earliest days of the revival of painting in Italy, the city of Bologna was distinguished for the cultivation of the art. The historian, Malvasia, gives the honour of founding its schools to Franco Bolognese, who lived in the days of Giotto and Dante. He is said to have eclipsed his master,

one Oderisio da Gubbio, even as Giotto surpassed Cimabue. But the early masters of Bologna remained far behind their contemporaries in Siena and Florence, and at best never rose above mediocrity till a new element was introduced into Bolognese art by the Ferrarese masters, whom the patronage of the Bentivogli family attracted from the neighbouring city. -

The court of the Este princes, as we have said, had become a centre for artists, who were employed to decorate with frescoes the ducal house in the same way that Mantegna was engaged in the Camera degli Sposi frescoes for the Gonzaga family at Mantua. Piero della Francesca had himself painted in Duke Borso's palace, and both his presence and the growing influence of Mantegna contributed in a large measure to mould the school of native artists. These different elements were imported to Bologna by the Ferrarese painters who migrated there. Marco Zoppo, who had been trained in the studio of Squarcione in Padua and who had worked with Mantegna in the church of the Eremitani friars, also visited Bologna, as did Lorenzo Costa. These artists probably were the first masters from whom Francesco di Marco Raibolini, called Francesco Francia, or simply Francia, the first painter of Bologna, whose work compares with the best Florentines and Umbrians of the day, received his first lessons in painting.

FRANCIA (1450-1518) was born in Bologna, the son of an industrious and well-to-do woodcarver and small landowner. He became goldsmith, jeweller, medallist, armourer, type-caster, and engraver before he commenced painting. The relations between the goldsmith's art and painting in this era were abundantly evident in the works of such artists as Pisanello, Verrocchio, Botticelli, the Pollaiuoli, and Ghirlandaio, but unlike some of these goldsmith-painters Francia did not take up a palette until he had reached middle age. Contemporary writers describe him as a man of strikingly handsome appearance; of gentle disposition, and as being eloquent, well informed, and distinguished. He was elected steward of the Goldsmiths' Guild in 1483, and again in 1489; he was named director of the mint in Bologna in 1508; one of the Gonfalonieri of the people in 1511; steward of the Guild a third time in 1512; and master of all the art guilds of the city in 1514; so that, if election to public office be a token of the esteem of one's fellow citizens, Francia must undoubtedly have been both beloved and respected.

Francia was a deeply religious man who spent his useful life entirely in his native city, devoted to his family and immersed in his art, letting the pagan and rationalistic movements influencing other artists pass him by untouched. Living as he did at a time when the Renaissance was fast hastening to its culminating point, when revived paganism had penetrated into

every part of society, when the love of the antique was the ruling impulse of intellectual thought, he continued to derive his inspiration almost exclusively from Christian sources, devoting his life and his art to the service of the Church, of which he remained a true and loyal son. His love of the Blessed Virgin must have been pure and consistent, for in some fifty of the principal works from his hands the Blessed Virgin figures in over forty of them. He paints her receiving from Gabriel the tidings that she was to become the mother of the Saviour of mankind; he paints her bending in love and adoration over her Divine Child in the manger at Bethlehem; he paints her presenting her Son in the Temple; standing at the foot of His cross; and receiving His dead Body into her arms on Calvary. Always the same subject and always the same air of tranquillity and peace; his inspiration seems inexhaustible. To the earnestness and purity of Fra Angelico's conceptions of the Virgin Mother of God, Francia adds finish and perfection, for he painted with a mastery of resources the great Dominican pioneer had never had at his command. He never sinks into conventionalism and affectation as did Perugino in his later works, and at the end of his life Francia rivals the best work the great Umbrian master produced in his prime. Within certain limits two of his "Madonna and Child with Saints" paintings will bear comparison with the most famed of Gian Bellini's. Small wonder, indeed, that he won Raphael's fine tribute. ". . . I shall look at them with the same delight and satisfaction which I feel in contemplating all your Virgins," wrote Raphael to him from Rome in 1508, "never having seen any by other hands that are more beautiful, and devout, and better painted."

Although born at Ferrara, LORENZO COSTA (1460?-1535) worked for over twenty years in Bologna and may therefore be said to form a link between the schools of Ferrara and Bologna. It is thought that he may have been a pupil of Cosimo Tura, but it is certain that he was greatly influenced by the work of Fra Filippo Lippi, Benozzo Gozzoli, and other Tuscan artists whose works he studied in Florence. On leaving Florence he painted in Ferrara and visited Bologna, where he met Francia. Later he was employed by the Bentivogli family until they were driven from Bologna in 1507. Many of Costa's frescoes and altar-pieces executed for churches in Ferrara, Bologna, and Ravenna have perished. Two splendid examples of his "Portrait of Battista Fiera of Mantua" now in the National Gallery, London, and his fine head of S. Joseph in his "Holy Family" in the National Gallery, Dublin. Probably the most important of his extant works is his large altar-piece painted about 1505 for the Oratorio delle Grazie at Faenza, now in the National Gallery, London, in which it will be seen that he has successfully

attempted to tone down the uncouthness of the earlier Ferrarese masters and to get more than a trace of Umbrian softness and gentleness into his painting. Costa is renowned not only as a painter but as a teacher; some of his pupils became famous, notably Ludovico Mazzolini and Dosso Dossi, of whom we have just spoken, perhaps the most original and fascinating painter of the Ferrarese School.

PARMA

To appreciate all that the School of Padua did for Italian art, we have only to trace its influence for a generation or two to discover that, in addition to the sons of Jacopo Bellini, to whose works we shall refer later, Squarcione had among his pupils the young Cosimo Tura, who was to found the School of Ferrara, and that Tura in turn had a pupil, Francesco Bianchi, who is regarded as the founder of the School of Modena. Until recent times, when Corrado Ricci has shown fairly conclusively that such could not have been the case, it was generally accepted that Antonio Allegri, called Correggio—who, for good or ill, was destined to exert a powerful influence on the art of Venice and Italy and all the world—was a pupil of Bianchi. The question as to who was his first master is still disputed: Dr. Meyer adopts the opinion of Mengs—which Ricci contradicts—that he was the pupil of Bianchi; Bigi, another biographer, believes he studied under Antonio Bartolotti or Bartolozzi; again, it is quite possible that it was from his uncle, a painter of sorts, and not from any of the outstanding painters of the time, that he acquired the first principles of art. While there is a divergence of opinion as to his first master, there is none as to the influences discernible in his Dresden “Madonna and S. Francis,” a typical example of his early work, which has been shown to combine elements of the Schools of Padua, Ferrara, and Bologna—Mantegna, Tura, and Francia.

Antonio Allegri (1494–1534), called CORREGGIO, from the place of his birth, a little Lombard town near Mantua, or “The Master of Parma,” from his work in Parma Cathedral, was born in 1494. In all the history of art there is probably no painter whose character has suffered so much from the falsehoods of gossip-retailing chroniclers as Correggio’s. He is pictured for us by such persons in many art histories as wandering poor, unwanted, and homeless, through the cities of Italy; as being avaricious and mean; as being oppressed and harrassed by the cares of a family he was unable to support; and as dying at last from the effects of extreme parsimony. The German scholar, Dr. Julius Meyer, was the first investigator to clear Correggio’s name of these baseless imputations. The artist, we now know, was a respectable,

middle-class citizen, able to provide himself and his family with the necessities if not the luxuries of life, and to leave his dependents reasonably provided for when he died. His father, a well-to-do clothing merchant, intended his son for one of the learned professions, and he was taught rhetoric and poetry by a professor from Modena called Battista Morastoni, philosophy, mathematics, anatomy, and optics by Giambattista Lombardi. Indeed, it may be said few if any artists of Correggio's social status received such liberal education.

His life was a singularly uneventful one, the principal events in it being his visits to Mantua and Parma, his marriage and the birth of his children, the lawsuits in which he engaged, and the carrying out of the work to which he gave his life—the painting of his pictures. Driven from his native town by the plague in 1511, Correggio went to Mantua and there studied the works of Mantegna which produced a lasting effect on his style of painting. But he died in his birthplace, in March, 1534, without having seen Florence, Venice, or Rome, and without having seen any save a few of the great paintings of his time. Travelling little he met few of the great men of his day, and early shook off the influence of his first masters. He developed a distinctive style of his own, and soon began to think, see, and execute from his own standpoint. Hence, he must always be regarded as one of the most original and independent of artists. Some of the greatest Italian painters, Raphael for example, have found the fullest expression for their genius only in large wall paintings which can never leave Italy. So it was with Correggio, his greatest works, his frescoes, were painted in Parma, and to Parma the student must go properly to study this most distinctive and perhaps most sensuous of great Italian artists.

Correggio's pictures may be grouped roughly under four headings: (*a*) His frescoes in the Cathedral of Parma, in the Church of S. John, the Church of S. Paul, and the convent of the Benedictine nuns, which are among his best works and rank with the works of Signorelli, Ghirlandaio, and the other major fresco painters of his age; (*b*) His easel pictures of sacred subjects, the most famous of which are his "Il Giorno" (Madonna and S. Jerome), in the Parma Gallery; his "La Notte" (The Nativity), and "The Reading Magdalene," in the Dresden Gallery; his "Mystic Marriage of S. Catherine," in the Louvre; his "Madonna Adoring the Infant Christ" in the Uffizi, and his "Christ Taking Leave of His Mother," in the National Gallery, London; (*c*) His mythological and allegorical paintings, of which the most frequently reproduced are his "Antiope with Cupid and Jove Disguised as a Satyr," now in the Louvre; his "Danae" in the Borghese Gallery, Rome;

and his "Education of Cupid" in the National Gallery, London, one of the two pictures which Ruskin said he would last part with out of the Gallery, the other being Titian's "Bacchus and Ariadne"; (d) his disputed works which we need not enumerate.

A lengthy essay could be written—and many have been written—on each and every one of the masterpieces just mentioned, but we must content ourselves here with a passing reference to his religious pictures.

"Il Giorno" is one of Correggio's finest easel paintings, and in it he unites, without a trace of cheap sentimentality, noble spirituality and tender domestic affection. The figure of S. Jerome in this picture will be found to be a splendid example of his idealistic style of painting by those who compare his nobly conceived, exquisitely modelled, and dignified figure with the representations of the same saint by Cosimo Tura or Leonardo da Vinci. These artists have conceived S. Jerome as an emaciated anchorite, but "The Master of Parma" conceives him as a stately, well-preserved, and handsome old man. His "Reading Magdalene" is one of the most popular and one of the most frequently copied pictures in the world; and his "La Notte" is regarded by many authorities as his greatest masterpiece. It is remarkable for what seems to be a supernatural light that emanates from the tiny Body of the Divine Child and illumines the face of the Virgin Mother, dazzles the three persons grouped near the manger, extends to S. Joseph at the back of the Blessed Virgin, and lights up the angels hovering in the air, who, says Vasari, "seem rather to have descended from heaven than to have been created by the hand of man." Master of aerial perspective though he was, and Vasari's tribute notwithstanding, Correggio has been frequently criticised for the drawing of the angels in this painting, but the affable grace of pose and the sweetness of expression of the Blessed Virgin as she bends over her Divine Son are beyond criticism. Another beautiful example of Correggio's powers depicting maternal love and tenderness is his Uffizi "Madonna Adoring the Infant Christ," remarkable for the expression of happiness in the hands as well as the face of the Blessed Virgin. The Louvre "Mystic Marriage of S. Catherine" is to our mind the least devotional of the religious pictures of Correggio selected for mention. All his personages, whether Christian or pagan, have a sweetness and attractiveness that is sometimes transmitted into a mannered elegance as in the faces of Mary and Catherine in this picture, and the face of Mercury in the "Mercury instructing Cupid," yet these paintings show Correggio's marvellous ability in rendering the flesh of children with an exquisite tenderness.

The history of the ancient town of Parma or its accomplishments in the

arts is not an exceptionally interesting one, and when it produced Correggio, Parma gave the world an artist whose appearance in the history of art is a phenomenon as isolated as his genius, which Burckhardt says is "the last and highest development of Italian painting." Other authorities, however, do not thus laud Correggio, but proclaim him the founder of the Decadent or "Sweet" School of Italian painting. We have said that there is probably no painter whose character has suffered so much from gossip-retailing chroniclers as Correggio's, and it is no exaggeration to say that his reputation as an artist has suffered in like manner. He has been accused — because he is the most graceful and most gentle of the great Renaissance artists, whose touch anticipates much of the Baroque manner — of treating flippantly and lightly the most sacred subjects, of transporting the Assumption as, for example, in the cupola of Parma Cathedral, into the atmosphere of light opera. This fresco is chiefly remarkable for its wonderful foreshortenings, and for the extensive range of the size of the figures, in order to convey, by their perspective diminution, an impression of greater space. It is a veritable masterpiece of aerial perspective and a successful attempt to depict a recession into the very vault of heaven. Yet when first finished, "The Assumption" was the subject of the most severe criticism and sarcastic jibes, such as that of the canon of the cathedral who, in allusion to the fact that many more limbs than bodies are visible from below, told Correggio that he had made *un gauzzetto di rane*, "a hash of frogs."

He has been accused of painting angels that are too beautiful, too attractive, whose draperies billow and flutter, and who smile alluringly at the beholder from canvases in which there is no atmosphere of repose, no reverence of religious rapture. The women of his pictures, whether the Blessed Virgin herself or her attendant saints are said to be too human, too pleasant, too fanciful or playful, and the sensuous delight he took in depicting the sweetest types of feminine beauty is said to be but thinly veiled sensuality. Berenson calls them "hymns to the charm of femininity the like of which have never been known before or since in Christian Europe." It is remarkable that Correggio is thus criticised for the beauty of the types he painted by some of the selfsame critics who cry down Fra Filippo Lippi for the coarseness of the types he portrayed. These critics do not, apparently, realise that Correggio lived in a world of his own creating, peopled with happy beings like himself who carried heaven in their own hearts, where all was peace, purity, love, and innocence. These critics make no allowance for the artist's great piety, for his ideal home life, for his friendship with the Benedictine monks, for his love of solitude, and for his refined feelings, all of which, in

the words of Leigh Hunt, tended to make him "paint the nude as though from a vision of ideal beauty; the sensuous in life he made pure and beautiful; earthly pleasures he spiritualised, and gave expression to mental beauty, the very culmination of true art."

If the efforts of the Florentine painters, culminating in the works of Leonardo da Vinci, Fra Bartolommeo, and Michelangelo, had, as we have attempted to show in preceding chapters, brought linear design to perfection; if the Umbrian masters had achieved triumphs in space-composition; and if the Venetian painters were teaching the world the functional importance of colour as an integral part of a pictorial conception, Correggio, impressed with Leonardo's theories of light and shade and aerial perspective, developed them beyond anything Leonardo had anticipated: *chiaroscuro* was his great contribution to art. And by the term *chiaroscuro* is not meant merely the general effect in a picture resulting from the management and relations of lights and shades, which had been obtained by many artists before him. Correggio's real contribution to art rather consisted of light in shadow, and shadow in light, so that the parts represented in shadow still have the clearness and warmth of those in light, and those in light the depth and softness of those in shadow.

One other distinguishing characteristic of his style is the simplicity and reality of his compositions—witness Toschi's water-colour copies of the pendentives in S. John the Evangelist in Parma, notably those of SS. Mark and Gregory, and SS. Luke and Ambrose. In these works Correggio is able to make us see and believe that the Evangelists and Doctors of the Church are debating, writing, and conversing, while seated in the most comfortable and natural manner possible on billowy clouds which are supported by boy-angels.

Correggio's example stimulated world-wide imitation, but many of his followers, lacking his genius, turned the fluent and facile rhythm of his figures and draperies into rhetorical flourish. His nudes if sensuously beautiful were pure; those of many of his followers became voluptuous. Religious pictures had originally been intended to convey instruction, and to promote feelings of awe and devotion, Correggio extended their scope, their possibilities, and their functions, when he endowed the denizens of heaven with physical beauty. His art not only served as an inspiration to Baroccio and the painters of the Catholic Revival and to the Mannerists under Parmigiano, but passing to France it had a profound influence on French art down to the end of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

VENETIAN ART

The Schools of Murano and Venice: the Vivarini and the Bellini

BEFORE dealing further with the principal artists who formed the Venetian School, we think it right to draw attention to the difference between the traditions, the destiny, the specific genius, the history, and the outlook of Venice and those of Florence, or of Milan, or of any North Italian city. Owing to her constant acquisition of new territory, Venice had come to be regarded as one of the most powerful of the Italian States, and had taken a prominent part in the political dissensions of the Peninsula. Nevertheless, as a great commercial and colonising power, she became markedly Oriental in character, although the conservatism of her aristocratic institutions contrasted strangely with the revolutionary radicalism of other cities. Less speedily enthralled by the spirit of the Renaissance, Venice clung to the heroic, austere, and mystical ideals of bygone days when faith was still allied to patriotism and when religion was still the generative power of all art; but, alas, the Venice in which Jacopo Bellini was born was not the Venice in which Titian died! These two phases of Venetian history are, in fact, as opposed as a Bellini Madonna is to a Titian Venus.

In the then famed art centres of Florence and Umbria, the genius of painting was to all intents and purposes the genius of the Latin race, but Venice was not a small, cramped, inland, walled-city, ruled by despots of narrow vision, torn by petty factions and rivalries, ever at the mercy of marauding mercenaries. Her inhabitants were adventurous-hearted men, who left the shelter of her lagoons, made for the open sea, and fared forth to seek the great world that lay beyond the horizon. The ships of every nation sought her ports, so that eventually the culture of Venice and the genius of Venetian painting became not Latin so much as European. After her conquests on the mainland, the Republic became not only a great

Italian but a great world-power, and Venice, with her immense wealth, became one of the principal centres of art, although not many of the great masters of the Venetian School were really Venetians. As we have seen, Squarcione and Mantegna of Padua, Bonsignori and Caroto of Verona, Francesco Cossa and Dosso Dossi of Ferrara, Francia of Bologna and Correggio of Parma, are but a few of the great Venetian masters who were born outside Venice.

Venetian art was for long retarded in its realistic development by the retention of certain Byzantine elements, from which the masters of the Florentine and Umbrian Schools had freed themselves and their pupils. On the other hand, it benefited so much from the discoveries of the other schools of the preceding centuries that, although it was the last to arise, the rapidity of its growth and florescence was unprecedented. By race, by history, by climate, and by inclination, the Venetians seemed to be marked out to make a new use of painting when at last they began to paint. The position of their city; her never-ending intercourse with the East; the ever changing panorama of colour of the robes of the rich traders from Africa, the Levant, and the Black Sea, that thronged her quays; the soft pearly grey and silver of the gold and flaming rose of her skies; her wealth; her pomp and circumstances; the panoply of her Doges; her love of splendour and pageantry—all, from the beginning, turned the attention of her painters towards rich colour. The Florentine artists excelled in fresco-paintings, which were flat-tinted drawings, but the Venetians thought in terms of colour rather than of line, and their colour was basic and has been compared, most happily, to the strains of richly orchestrated music.

Painting was practised in Venice on a small scale during the fourteenth century, but as we have in the preceding chapters taken a general glance at the formation of the Schools of Florence and Umbria, spoken of the masters of some of the small North Italian cities, and as the art of painting was no longer in its infancy, we need not concern ourselves here with the early painters of Murano and Venice. We shall, therefore, begin the story of Venetian painting at the time Gentile da Fabriano, the Umbrian, and Vittore Pisanello, the Veronese, came to paint the Ducal palace. We begin here because these two outsiders gave to Venetian painting the long-awaited stimulus which opened the way to the florescence of the Venetian School. Gentile da Fabriano's work was greatly admired and his influence in forming the School of Venice was considerable; for a group of painters, among whom the most conspicuous are Michele Giambono (c. 1400-c. 1462), Jacobello del Fiore (c. 1380-1440), Antonio Vivarini, and Jacopo Bellini, were inspired

by him. The last two of these artists separated and became the founders or, more correctly, the revivers of rival schools: Vivarini of the group of artists working on the Island of Murano, who had long kept apart from the Venetians; and Bellini of a group working on the mainland. The ultimate fusion of these two groups brought into being the true Venetian School and led to the golden age of Venetian art.

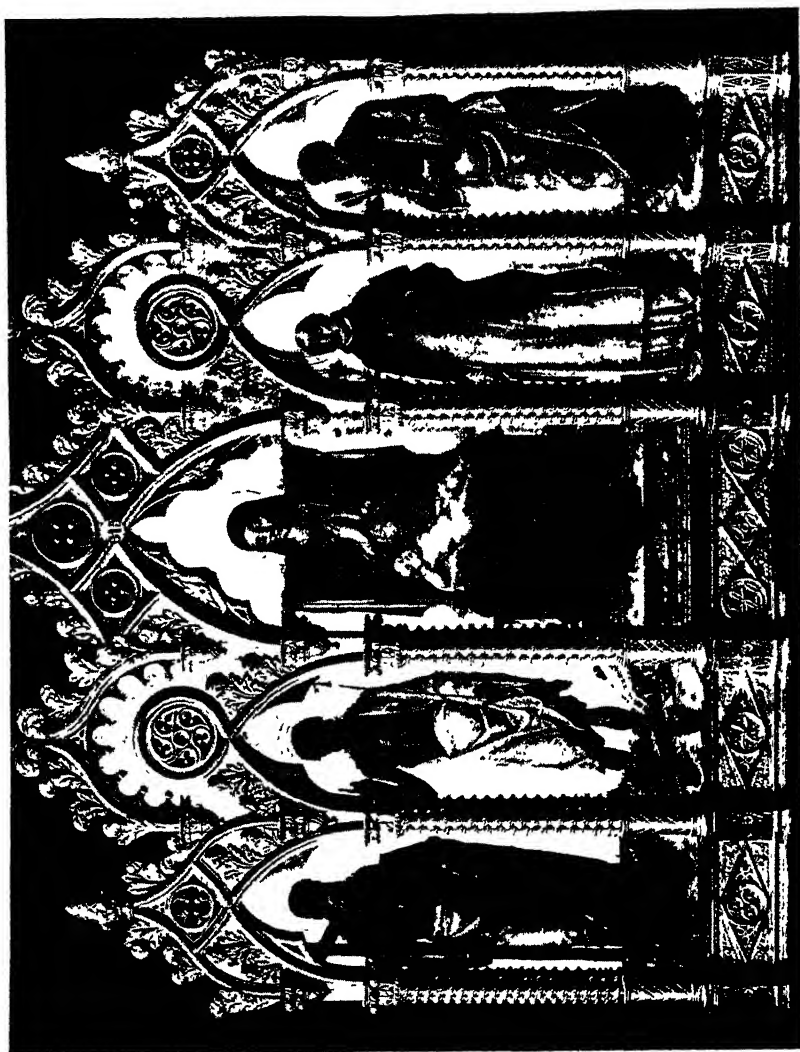
In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Island of Murano, although close to Venice, had a population of some thirty thousand people. Its rich and flourishing condition was due to its popularity as a residential resort and to its extensive glass industry. Churches, convents, and palatial residences required statuary, mosaics, and paintings, and the demand created for such artistic productions brought into existence a native Muranese School of art which for long vied with that of Venice itself. The most notable artists painting at this time were Giovanni d'Alamagna and the Antonio Vivarini we have just mentioned, who became partners and flourished between 1430 and 1470. A typical example of their work is "The Virgin and Child with Four Doctors of the Church" in the Accademia in Venice. On the death of Giovanni d'Alamagna, Antonio was joined by his brother, Bartolommeo. Their joint work "The Virgin and Child with Saints" painted for the Carthusians of Bologna was the first Venetian work to show the influence of Donatello and Paduan classicism. Another, and the ablest member of this gifted Murano family, and one of the most notable Venetian masters of the fifteenth century, was Alvise (Lugi) Vivarini (1446-1502), the greatest product of the Muranese group and the rival of the Bellini.

Of the early history of ALVISE VIVARINI little is known, and he owes much of his modern fame to Berenson, who—while doing research work for his study of Lorenzo Lotto—began an investigation of the Muranese painter which eventually won for him the prominent place he now occupies in the history of Venetian art. Alvise's first dated work is the polyptych of 1475, painted for the Franciscans of Montefiorentino. His Madonna of 1480 is in the Accademia of Venice; there is a picture of 1483 at Borletta, one at Naples of 1485, a Madonna at Vienna of 1489, and a head of our Lord and a Resurrection, both in Venice. In 1488 he wrote to the Signoria asking them that he be allowed "to devote himself without return of payment or award" to the restoration of the old paintings in the Sala del Gran Consiglio in Venice and to prove his skill side by side with the rival Bellini who were then painting there. His request was acceded to, but, unfortunately, the oil paintings he executed on canvas, to replace frescoes painted in the early part of the century by da Fabriano and Pisanello, were destroyed by fire in 1577.



HOLY NIGHT

Correggio



Bartolommeo Vivarini

MADONNA AND SAINTS



THE ANNUNCIATION

Carlo Crivelli



MADONNA AND CHILD

Giovanni Bellini

The early works of Alvise Vivarini reflect his Muranese training, but an independent originality marked his middle and later periods. He was strongly influenced in his portrait work by Antonello da Messina, and, if not in draughtsmanship and the use of colour, at least in composition, he is the equal of Bellini. He was held in high esteem by the painters of the Murano and the mainland groups, and carried on the old traditions of Venetian art until the day came when the rival school of the Bellini became supreme in Venice. He numbered among his pupils and followers a numerous band of artists who won renown, such as Carlo Crivelli, Bartolommeo Mantegna, Francesco Bonsignori, of whom we have already spoken when referring to the painters of Verona, Cima da Conegliano, Marco Besaiti, and Lorenzo Lotto.

CARLO CRIVELLI (c. 1430–c. 1493), of whose life so little is known, was a painter of warmth and charm whose works bear strong evidences that he was indebted to Paduan and Venetian masters, and more particularly to the Vivarini for his early training. Reckoning his birth and death from his earliest and latest signed paintings, it has been convincingly proved that he was born about 1430 and died about 1493. He left Venice and worked for well over twenty years in cities and towns lying within the Marches of Ancona, spending some fourteen years at Ascoli, but wherever he was, whenever he signed a picture, he never failed to state that he was a Venetian. Carolus Crivellus Venetus, he invariably signed his works, till he received the honour of Knighthood from Ferdinand of Naples when he added "Miles" (knight) to his signature.

Out of more than fifty existing works by Crivelli, over thirty are worthy of careful study. He early attained a style of his own, but, although he survived till the end of the fifteenth century, he persisted in adhering to the fashion of its beginning. This, however, was probably mere affectation, for none knew better of the progress of painting or was better acquainted with the innovations of his contemporaries. Crivelli did not excel in composition but was a good colourist. His early works show his love of decorative accessories, such as festoons of fruit and vegetables with birds perched on them, masks, medallions, veined marbles, background draperies, and architecture; but in his later works he gives more place and prominence to the divine and human personages he portrays. The limbs of his figures are, however, so badly jointed that sometimes his anatomical drawing almost verges on the grotesque, as in, to give but two examples, the figure of our Lord in his "Christ and S. Francis," and the flat, squashed-down head of his "S. Thomas Aquinas." His earliest work is the polyptych of 1468. Strange to say, not in

Italy but in England, where there are some twenty of his paintings, can Crivelli be studied with advantage. The National Gallery has eight of these, including the "Demidoff Altar-piece," "The Dead Christ Supported by Angels," "The Vision of Blessed Gabriele Ferretti," and others. Notwithstanding his somewhat archaic style and methods, Crivelli could, when he wished to do so, paint as realistically as his most "advanced" contemporary. Indeed, his renderings of grief in, for example, the Crawshaw *Pieta*, the Vatican Gallery *Pieta*, and the Brera "Crucifixion," are almost painful in their realism.

BARTOLOMMEO MONTAGNA (c. 1450-1523), one of the most notable painters of Vicenza, is distinctly Venetian in training and was probably the pupil of Alvise Vivarini, although he was influenced by the Bellini. GIOVANNI BATTISTA CIMA (1460-1517) was, it is thought, a pupil of Montagna who later studied under Alvise. He is noted for his pearly grey landscape backgrounds; for the fact that most of his pictures are "Madonna and Child" studies; and for the smooth and porcelain-like surface of his paintings, recalling the technique of the Flemish masters. But a painter of much more importance than Montagna, or Cima, or Marco Basaiti (c. 1470-1527), who is thought to have been of Greek parentage, was Lorenzo Lotto who, like Alvise Vivarini, owes much of his modern fame to Berenson.

LORENZO DI TOMASSO LOTTO (1480-1556), one of the greatest of all Italian portrait painters, sometimes called *Il Bergamasco* from his long residence in Bergamo, was born in Venice about 1480. The name of his master is not known but his paintings reveal evidences of his study of the works of Alvise Vivarini, the Bellini, Giorgione, and Raphael. He is an artist of whom it may be said that he was born before his time; for the intellectual and technical merits of his work were in advance of the painting of his day. In his portrait work he displayed such extraordinary skill in seizing on and transferring to canvas the peculiarities of character, temperament, and modes of his sitters that as a psychological painter he has seldom been surpassed even to this day. He lived and painted in Treviso from 1503 to 1506, when he went to Recanati, where he painted an altar-piece for S. Domenico of "The Virgin Enthroned with SS. Urban and Gregory," which he finished in 1508. It is known that he visited Rome between that year and 1512 and worked on some frescoes, now no longer in existence, in an upper chamber of the Vatican, and that while there he had an opportunity of studying the work of Raphael and Perugino, and the paintings of the great Florentines. He worked almost constantly in Bergamo between 1518 and 1528, and painted frescoes in Trescorre in 1524. Indeed, it was for little rural towns

like Trescorre, Cingoli, and Mogliano, that he executed some of his finest works. Lotto returned to Venice in 1527 where he met Palma Vecchio and came under the influence of Titian; but he became a rival rather than an imitator of the great Venetian. To this year belongs his famous painting of the art-collector, Andrea Odoni, the Correggiesque qualities of which have led to its being ascribed to "The Master of Parma." But Lotto had won a measure of fame even before Correggio and, as Morelli has aptly said, they were "the two kindred spirits who worked at the same period." In his definitely religious paintings, Lotto displays great fertility of invention and poetic imagination with a leaning towards the ecstatic and the mystical. He was a devout son of the Church and in his last years interested himself in the Holy House of Loretto. He died in Loretto in 1556.

While taking this hasty glance at the painters of Murano, we have wandered far from the mainland, and we must now return to Jacopo Bellini. The works of Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello, had, as already mentioned, no more ardent admirers or talented observers than the young Antonio Vivarini and Jacopo Bellini. The last named became the pupil and the friend of the famous Umbrian master of Fabriano, and was later destined to become the father of two sons, Gentile Bellini and Giovanni better known as Gian Bellini, who are regarded as the real founders of the school of painters that was to become the glory of Venice and all the world. Jacopo Bellini himself never became a great painter, but he had sound knowledge and a delicate sense of colour. His extant paintings are rare, one of the five undisputed examples being his "Madonna and Child" in the Uffizi, and he is famous rather through his sons and his daughter, Nicolosia, who married Mantegna, and thus helped to bring into the Venetian School the powerful influence of Paduan art.

GENTILE BELLINI (c. 1427-1507) worked for many years as a pupil of and assistant to his father. He painted at first in the style of Squarcione, Mantegna, and Donatello. Soon the fame of Gentile began to exceed that of the elder Bellini, and when his father retired, he continued the work in the *Scuola* of S. John the Evangelist, Venice, painting eight of the pictures of the "Miracle of the Holy Cross."

In 1479 the Sultan, Mohammed II, asked the Doge to send him a portrait painter and the Venetian Senate selected Gentile Bellini to make the journey to Constantinople. Vasari's version of the artist's reception by the Grand Turk is quaintly worded; and that monarch's portrait, painted during a year's sojourn at the Sultan's Court, is to-day one of the chief treasures of the National Gallery, London. Another product of this journey is his canvas

"The Reception of the Venetian Ambassadors by the Grand Vizier," now in the Louvre. One painting of great historical importance, but of weak composition and poor grouping, is his "The Miracle of S. Mark's Square," now in the Accademia. His great canvas, "The Sermon of S. Mark at Alexandria," now in the Brera Gallery, in Milan, is a stately representation of a contemporary scene, and, although it has an overelaborated architectural background, shows skilful, if quaint, grouping of a great number of figures, and richness of colour in the Oriental costumes. In his middle and later period, Gentile abandoned tempera and painted in oil, probably influenced by the example of Antonello da Messina. He died in Venice in 1507, when past his eightieth year.

We have already made mention — when speaking of Domenico Veneziano and Andrea del Castagno — of the Sicilian painter, ANTONELLO DA MESSINA (1430-1479). He came to Venice in the middle of the career of Gian Bellini, and is now frequently classed as a painter of the Venetian School — owing to the fact that he lived and worked for some years in Venice, although he followed the manner and spirit of the painters of the Netherlands. His first masters were probably some of the Flemish artists who worked in parts of southern Italy, and his mastery of the Flemish method of oil painting, the perfection of his work both in portraiture and landscape, and the vivid richness of his colouring, made a profound impression not only on established Venetian masters like Bellini, but on the rising generation of Venetian painters. His "S. Jerome in his Study" combines the charm of both Italian and Flemish Schools: the refinement and sense of beauty of the Italians, and the execution and careful draughtsmanship of Van Eyck and Memling. For tenderness of feeling, sense of space, and perfection not even Gian Bellini has excelled Antonello's "Crucifixion." But it was in his portrait work that he won the ungrudging appreciation of the Venetians of his day. His "Portrait of a Condottiere" in the Louvre and his "Portrait of a Young Man," frequently called a "Self Portrait," in the National Gallery, London, are remarkable for their force, vital expression, richness of tone, and insight into character, and were a revelation to the Vivarini and the Bellini and their followers. Even the finest work of Giorgione and Titian owes much to the early work of this gifted Sicilian, who helped to lay the foundations of modern painting in Venice.

GIOVANNI BELLINI (c. 1430-1516) the second son of Jacopo, is one of the outstanding painters of all time, and, although the first of the truly great Venetians, in him Christian Venetian art attained perfection. His best works were never surpassed by any of those produced by his illustrious successors,

the romantic and short-lived Giorgione; the wonderful portrait painter, Lorenzo Lotto; the grandiloquent Tintoretto, or the indefatigable and sumptuous Titian. The son of an artist, Jacopo; the brother of an artist, Gentile; the brother-in-law of the great Lombard, Mantegna, who was to leave the stamp of his powerful genius on all the schools of painting of the world; the friend of Albrecht Dürer and of the ruling Doges of his day; the teacher of Giorgione, Titian, and Palma Vecchio; Giovanni was fortunate in the epoch in which he was born, in his family, in his environment, but above and beyond all in his love of religion and his devotion to the principles of simplicity and austerity that dominated his life and his art.

The exact date of Giovanni Bellini's birth is unknown, but the probable date is 1430, and at this time — although her pleasure-loving inhabitants little realised it — the power of Venice was on the wane. Fratricidal wars with Milan and Florence and sea fights with the Genoese, although adding a dozen provinces in half a century to Venetian territory, had cost vast sums of money and a serious loss of human life that was out of all proportion to the results obtained. When Giovanni (or Gian) was a little boy, the fear of a Turkish invasion frequently darkened the lives of the dwellers of the eastern end of the Mediterranean. In his prime he saw the Sultan, Mohammed II, the conquerer of Constantinople, wage a successful war against Venice and wrest from her Scutari, Stalimene, and other territory, and levy upon her an indemnity of two hundred thousand ducats. In his last years he saw Venice fighting for her very existence as a state, and Lombardy, Verona, Vicenza, and Padua passing out of her hands, with her rulers seeking the aid of the Sultans of Turkey and Egypt.

Religion was ever the chief motive of the best work of Gian Bellini, and during his long life he held his brush almost exclusively for the service of sacred art. Even as an inspired Dominican preacher exercised a great influence on the life of Fra Angelico, a great Franciscan exercised a profound influence on the life of Bellini, for there is little doubt that, while he was assisting his father in the decoration of the Gattamelata Chapel at Padua, he listened enthralled to the passionate appeals and fiery denunciations of the great S. Bernardino of Siena, who travelled Italy from Milan to Naples preaching the Passion of Christ and propagating devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. Gian did not, like Fra Angelico, enter a religious order, but the tendencies of his father and Andrea Mantegna towards paganism held no attraction for him. He resisted to the best of his ability the tastes of his patrons — among whom was Isabella d'Este, Duchess of Mantua, famous for her great collection of mythological conceits — who desired him to paint

"profane" pictures for them. His obstinacy served as a bulwark against the tide of pagan sensuousness that was later, with Veronese, to help to bring about the decline of Christian art. Gian Bellini sought to express the beauty of the New Testament stories; and there is definitely no Italian painter whose achievements in the field of sacred art can vie with his. His faith was as fervent and his spiritual insight was as keen as Fra Angelico's, and his style gradually developed until he attained that perfect harmony of drawing, perspective, drapery, light, and colour, sought in vain by many of his predecessors and never surpassed by his most famous successors.

The new method of painting in oil, which Gian Bellini carried to its highest perfection, helped him to procure a new softness of outline in the works of his middle and later period, which eliminated much of the harshness and ugliness evident in the work done under Paduan influences. His paintings of the Madonna and Child are among the most beautiful conceptions extant of the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son. No one can stand before them without experiencing the tenderest emotions of reverence and love. Although he painted many such pictures, not one is a repetition of the other: in some studies the Divine Child raises His hand in benediction; in others He is depicted lying asleep in His Mother's lap; in some He is held caressed in the Virgin's arms; while in others he stands upright on her knee or, as in the half-length pictures, on a ledge. The most beautiful of them all is, perhaps, the "Madonna of the Trees," in the Accademia, which is a perfect blending of affection and reverence, and which takes its name from one of the happiest landscape backgrounds he ever painted.

Bellini painted with the same spirit of fervent faith that imbued the early Tuscans: theirs and his was the joy and pride of faith born of a high hope of heaven and not of the fear of hell. He painted Mary, the Mother of God, because he loved her, because he believed in her immaculate purity, and because he wished her to be venerated by all mankind, and not that he might in portraying her display his ability as a painter. According to Ruskin, Leonardo da Vinci is a better draughtsman than Bellini but has not his colour; Titian is a greater colourist than Bellini but has not his piety; and Fra Angelico is more heavenly than Bellini but has not his manliness, and so he is moved to say: "Bellini is the only artist who appears to me to have united, in equal and magnificent measures, justness of drawing, nobleness of colouring, and perfect manliness of treatment, with the pure, religious feeling."

One of the best known of Gian Bellini's works, and a famous example of his powers in portraiture, is his painting of the Doge Leonardo Loredano,

in the National Gallery, London. All the great and grave dignity as well as a suggestion of the pomp and splendour of Venice seems to emanate from this portrait of her chief magistrate with his severe and shrewd yet benevolent countenance. If this painting failed as a portrait, it would still be interesting for the arrangement of colour: the shimmer of brocade in the robe, the white of the cap, and the rich blue and turquoise of the background, glowing colours which are merely meant to be a setting for the fine dominating, wrinkled face of the Venetian ruler.

Bellini died in November, 1516, and with him passed away the last great painter of purely religious subjects. He had stood for long between art and paganism; he was, says Ruskin, one of the painters "who used their powers of painting to show the objects of faith," but he was, alas, to be succeeded by artists who "used the objects of faith that they might show their powers of painting. The distinction is enormous; the difference is as incalculable as irreconcilable." In the works of Giorgione and Titian, profane Italian painting soon reached its highest point and then the Venetian School declined as rapidly as it had arisen.

The most important Venetian painter after Gian Bellini and before the rise of Giorgione and Titian was VITTORE CARPACCIO (c. 1466-c. 1423) who was par excellence the painter of the *calle* and *canali*. Even to-day it is from his paintings and the journal of Marin Sanudo that the best impressions may be obtained of Venice when the Republic was in its glory. Carpaccio was born at Capo d'Istria, and he was a pupil and follower of the Bellini. What is perhaps his earliest known work is in the National Gallery, London, his "Madonna and Child Enthroned with SS. John the Baptist and Christopher, and the Doge Giovanni Mocenigo in Adoration"; but his most important works are the "S. Ursula" series of paintings now in the Accademia of Venice. His love of architecture and landscape is displayed in the backgrounds of many of his pictures, notably in his "The Visitation," "The Calling of S. Matthew," "The Death of the Virgin," "The Meeting of Joachim and Anne," and in his renderings of episodes in the lives of S. Stephen, S. Jerome, and S. George, which are also remarkable for their glimpses of mediaeval Venice.

The Guilds of Venice — which while having some of the features of our modern mutual benefit societies, were, first of all, religious confraternities of laymen — proved to be of the utmost importance in the development of Venetian art, because the richer the Guild the more imposing and spacious its headquarters, and the more able were its patrons, leaders, and members to pay for the decoration of the walls of their chapels and assembly-halls.

The Guild of S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni, founded for the benefit of Dalmatian sailors visiting Venice; the Guild of S. Ursula, founded to provide for orphan children; and the Guild of S. Stefano, employed Vittore Carpaccio to decorate the halls of their meeting-places. In executing the work entrusted to him he won wide renown and came to be regarded as the most Venetian of all the artists of Venice. But if the Guilds or *Scuole* of Venice helped in the development of Venetian art, they also brought about its decline because — although they employed the best artists and instructed them to execute religious paintings — they were the means of breaking the last weak ties that bound art to the service of the Church. Venetian art had long shown definite tendencies of becoming more national than religious. When the Church, or in other words, when the Franciscan and Dominican friars no longer gave the artists their commissions to paint pictures, when such orders came directly from the Guilds or societies of laymen, then Venetian art, already more national than religious, gradually became also more civic than religious. It became the servant of the state and of the city, not of the sanctuary; it looked to the Government and not to the Church for its patronage; it looked to society not to religion for its inspiration, and thus the School of Venice became the first secular school of Italian painting.

Gentile Bellini, Cima, and Carpaccio, were the chief masters of their day employed by the *Scuole* to commemorate in pageant pictures the religious, political, and civic processions, which, it must be said, reflect something of the religious but more of the everyday life of the people. In these and other paintings of Carpaccio's are to be seen rich Venetian costumes; multi-coloured, flowing, Eastern robes; stately architecture; horses, fawns, rabbits, partridges, doves, and many other beasts and birds, the careful execution of which proves that he was omnivorously observant and an ideal genre painter. For the Dalmatian Guild of S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni, he executed nine paintings of scenes and incidents in the lives of SS. George, Jerome, and Tryphenius, the patron saints of Dalmatia, but these are now partially destroyed and blackened by age and repainting. His paintings of episodes in the life of S. Stephen, in various European galleries, are among his best works.

Carpaccio died in Venice between 1523 and 1526. He was a link between the old and the new, between the Venice of the Middle Ages and the Venice of the Later Renaissance, between the early painters such as Jacobello del Fiore and the great Venetians: Giorgione, whose works are conspicuous for rich and brilliant colour, breadth and nobility of style, and a poetical, quasi-sensuous charm, and Titian, the greatest product of the Venetian School, who is regarded as one of the "divinities of art."



THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE

Vittore Carpaccio



MADONNA WITH SS. FRANCIS AND LIBERALE

Giorgione



THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

Giorgione



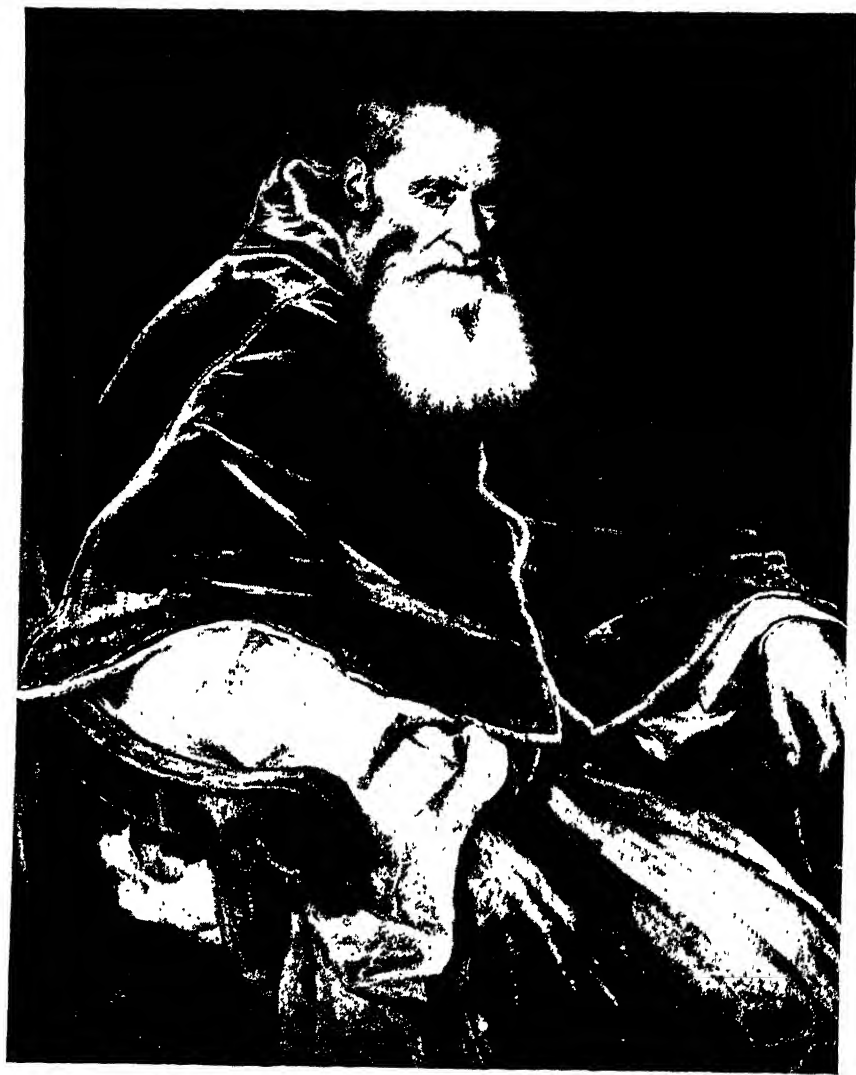
S. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Sebastian del Piombo



S. BARBARA

Palma Vecchio



PAUL III

Titian



THE PESARO MADONNA

Titian



THE TRIBUTE MONEY

Titian

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

VENETIAN PAINTING

Giorgione to Titian

GIORGIONE BARBARELLI (c. 1478–1510), Zorzo da Castelfranco, known as Giorgione, "Big George," was born at Castelfranco, some twenty-five miles from Venice. While his biographers can gather but few facts that remain undisputed about his family life and early upbringing, they are in general agreement that he was a man of handsome appearance, attractive personality, and romantic disposition. He studied, with Titian, under Gian Bellini in Venice, and, being a skilled musician and a pleasing vocalist, he found his way into the most exclusive circles of Venetian society, where he received commissions to paint the portraits of many of the greatest personages of his day, including Caterina Carnaro, Gonzalvo of Cordova, and two of the Doges. But his love of music did more for Giorgione than make him an agreeable and entertaining friend to his patrons; it prompted him to introduce music as a subject in some of his pictures, or those attributed to him, for example, in "The Concert," in Dresden; the "Fete Champetre," in the Louvre; and the man playing a mandolin in "The Golden Age" in the National Gallery, London. It urged him to strive to create that *melody* of line and *harmony* of colour for which his paintings are renowned, and which drew from Walter Pater the tribute that his pictures "constantly aspire to the condition of music."

Giorgione was in many ways an innovator: he was among the first to paint genre pictures, that is movable pictures in their own frames, without any devotional, allegorical, or historical purpose; among the first to introduce into Venice the fashion of painting the fronts of houses in fresco; and among the first to discard detail and substitute breadth and boldness in the treatment of nature and architecture. Giorgione painted landscapes with figures and draperies with consummate skill. He imitated the actual textures of draperies much more successfully than any of his predecessors. His

talent developed rapidly and his pictures were in great demand, but, to-day, very little of his work is authenticated. He had such a host of imitators and copyists that there remains even now much confusion in the Continental galleries concerning the attribution of his pictures.

Precious few of his paintings have never been called in question by any expert. One such picture is his famous Castelfranco "Madonna Enthroned with SS. Liberale and Francis," painted some few years before the close of his short life, in which the rhythm, the balance, and dignity of the whole composition and the loveliness of the characters he portrays appeal not only to the eye but to the heart. In the National Gallery, London, there is a "Knight in Armour," now called "Gaston de Foix," bequeathed to the institution in 1855 by Samuel Rogers, the banker and minor poet, which is said to be a study for the figure of S. Liberale. The traveller with leisure to make the journey to the little crumbling red-walled town of Castelfranco to compare this Giorgione masterpiece with Gian Bellini's famous "Madonna and Child with Saints" in the Church of S. Zaccaria in Venice, will see at a glance the influence of Bellini in the work of his famous pupil. It is the simplicity and sweetness of pure womanhood in the Blessed Virgin, the naturalness of the Divine Child, the knightliness of S. Liberale, and the appealing, inviting gesture of S. Francis, that moved Ruskin to refer to it as "one of the two most perfect pictures in existence; alone in the world as an imaginative representation of Christianity, with a monk and a soldier on either side." Another of his unquestioned pictures is the "Adrastus and Hypsipyle."

Giorgione is the one great Venetian painter whose undisputed work is not represented in any public picture-gallery or church in Venice. His only authentic work in the city is in the Giovanelli Palace, and this will seem all the more strange to the picture-lover who strives to imagine Florence with but one Fra Angelico, or London with but one Turner. The Giovanelli Palace picture has at various times been known as "The Tempest," for a thunder storm is brewing in the background; as "The Soldier and the Gipsy"; and as "Giorgione's Family"; but is now more generally known as "Adrastus and Hypsipyle." It illustrates the Greek legend which tells how King Adrastus found Queen Hypsipyle disguised as a nurse, after she had been driven out of Lemnos by a conspiracy. When in 1817 this picture, then known as "The Family Giorgione," was in the Manfrini Palace, it was the picture of all Venice which most delighted Lord Byron. "To me," he wrote, "there are none like the Venetians—above all, Giorgione." The picture is famous as one of the very earliest expressions in art of a stormy landscape.

Speaking of landscape reminds us that we must again venture to disagree with Berenson who would have us believe that painting was, in Giorgione's day, still too much "connected with solemn religious rites and state ceremonies to be used at once for ends of personal pleasure." "So landscape," he says, "had to slide in under the patronage of S. Jerome; and the portrait crept in half hidden under the mantle of a patron saint." This is unfair of Berenson. No one knew better than he that art had been roughly thrusting aside the gentle restraining hand of the Church long before the end of the fifteenth century. No one knew better than he that the Italians as a race had *always* used art for the ends of personal pleasure; that they gloried in and amply rewarded artistic achievement, frequently making a fiesta on the day a worthy picture was finished or unveiled; and no one knew better than he that landscape had not "to *slide in* under the patronage of S. Jerome," or any other saint, and that landscape had been painted, boldly and beautifully, *for its own sake*, a century before Giorgione.

Admittedly, thirteenth-century Italian landscape drawing and painting was of a very conventional type, often of a diagrammatic kind. However, Gentile da Fabriano treated landscape less severely, followed the methods and manner of the Flemish School of painting, was strongly influenced by German engravings of landscape, then becoming known in Italy, and may be said to have treated landscape in at least some accordance with nature. Fra Angelico introduced highly idealised scenery into some of his pictures, and was not only the first Italian to paint scenery that can be identified, namely, a view of Lake Trasimene from Cortona, but one of the first to get some of the joyousness of nature into his efforts. Benozzo Gozzoli, his pupil, painted some fine, though crowded, landscape backgrounds; and Lorenzo Ghiberti introduced rocks, hills, and trees not only into the backgrounds but into the foregrounds of his richly sculptured panels of his Baptistery gates in Florence. Masaccio, too, as in his fresco of "The Tribute Money," in the Carmine, could paint mountains sparsely clothed with trees, deep ravines and floating clouds. Piero della Francesca was unrivalled as a landscape painter in his day; indeed, some of his compositions are remarkable for the outdoor effects in light and shade. Antonio Pollaiuolo, Baldovinetti, and Leonardo's master, Andrea Verrocchio, were others who contributed largely to the advancement of landscape painting in Florentine art. Nor must we forget Perugino, to mention but one more master who painted landscape *for its own sake*, beyond whose sweet, gentle Madonnas we frequently gaze to catch a glimpse, in the backgrounds of his pictures, of the quiet Umbrian valleys, the softly flowing rivers, the delicate trees, and the limpid evening

skies he knew so well and painted so lovingly and tenderly with haunting beauty and splendour.

But to return to Giorgione. There is almost complete agreement among the critics as to the authenticity of four other paintings of Giorgione: "The Trial of Moses," "The Judgement of Solomon," and "The Knight of Malta," all in the Uffizi, and his frequently reproduced "Christ Bearing the Cross." The first of these, which is sometimes called the "Ordeal of Fire," depicts a scene from an old rabbinic legend which tells that when Moses was three years old, Pharaoh's counsellors advised that he should be slain, but the monarch objected that the child was too young and innocent. To decide the matter a ruby ring and some glowing embers were set before the baby, and it was agreed, if he should stretch out his hand for the ring, that he must know right from wrong and should, therefore, be slain; but if he attempted to lift the burning embers, his life would be spared. When the child saw what was set before him, he reached out for the gleaming ruby ring, but the Angel Gabriel, present in disguise, turned his hand aside and Moses took a hot coal and put it in his mouth. "The Judgement of Solomon," like the "Ordeal by Fire," a romantic conception of the event, is inspired by the neo-pagan spirit of the Renaissance, and is one of the first of Giorgione's renderings of classical subjects. Both pictures are beautiful landscapes bathed in golden light, and both are lyrical rather than dramatic. His "Knight of Malta," thought by some to be a portrait of Stefano Colonna, and his "Portrait of a Young Man" exemplify Giorgione's greatness as a portrait painter and give him place with Velasquez and his fellow student Titian. Just as the Bellini were the first to paint half-length Madonnas and Saints, so Giorgione was the first to paint pictures of the same kind of a profane character. The unfinished portrait "An Unknown Man," probably a member of the Querini family, in its colour scheme of browns and reds represents a style of portraiture invented by Giorgione, which Titian afterwards copied and developed. "In certain definite individual characters," says Burckhardt, "Giorgione is the true precursor of Rembrandt."

When Colvin, Morelli, Justi, the older Venturi, Berenson, and other critical experts are finished with gentle, ill-fated Giorgione's masterpieces, we are left with very few that are authentic. One of his pictures is given to Sebastian del Piombo, another to Schiavone, another to Romano, and another to Titian, and so they are lost to him and to us. Lost, too, is the famous picture which, according to Vasari, Giorgione painted to prove the superiority of painting to sculpture. While Andrea Verrocchio was in Venice engaged on his Colleoni monument, his admirers argued that sculpture—which repre-

sented as many aspects of a figure — was superior to painting. Giorgione maintained that a painting could show at a single glance all the aspects that a man can present, while sculpture can only do so if one walks about it, and he produced a picture to prove his contention. He painted a nude figure in the act of turning its shoulders; at its feet was a clear, still pool of water, the reflection from which showed the front of the figure. On one side was a highly burnished corslet, which the person posing for the picture had taken off, which gave a left side view because the shining metal reflected everything. On the other side was a mirror showing the right side; and the spectator was, of course, gazing at the back of the figure. Giorgione died in 1510 a victim of the plague, which, some fifty years later, was to carry off Titian.

Of Giorgione's pupils and followers, two of the most important were Sebastian Luciani (1485-1547), called towards the end of his life *SEBASTIAN DEL PIOMBO* (of the Seal), from the office he had at the Papal Court; and Jacopo Negretti, generally known as *Palma Vecchio* to distinguish him from his younger kinsman of the same name. Sebastian del Piombo might worthily have worn the mantle of Giorgione, had he permitted himself to develop on native Venetian lines. He possessed the genius and powers that go to the making of an outstanding artist, but many think it unfortunate that his fortunes led him too soon to carry the colour of Venice to Rome, where the works of Sienese, Florentine, and Umbrian painters, notably the works of Sodoma, Raphael, and Michelangelo profoundly impressed and influenced him. In the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, his portrait "*Cardinal Antonio Cioocchi del Monte Sansovino*" shows his Raphaelesque manner, and some of the figures in the lunettes of subjects taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in the Villa Farnesina — have the power and muscularity of Michelangelo's figures. Sebastian's most important work is his great altar-piece, "*The Majesty of S. John Chrysostom*," in the Church of S. Crisostomo, in Venice, painted in 1508 when he was under the influence of Giorgione. S. John Chrysostom is shown enthroned and attended by six saints, three men and three women; the latter are thought to be SS. Mary Magdalene, Catherine, and Agnes, but, they are not the types hitherto seen in religious paintings: they are stately and generous-figured women grown to maturity in a rich, romantic, pleasure-seeking Venice, akin to Titian's "*Flora*" of the Uffizi, a painting in which that master left to future generations his vision of ideal Venetian womanhood.

PALMA VECCHIO (c. 1480-1528) was not a Venetian, having been born at Serinalta, near Bergamo, but he was a pupil of Gian Bellini and was, as we

have said, greatly influenced by Giorgione. There are three of his pictures in the Accademia of Venice: his "S. Peter Enthroned with Saints," his "Christ and the Woman taken in Adultery" and his "Assumption of the Virgin." His best known and most frequently reproduced picture is his "S. Barbara," which is preserved in the Church of S. Maria Formosa in Venice. Were it not for the calm spiritual beauty of the face of S. Barbara, we should be pardoned for thinking that Palma in painting her strove to depict not a saint but a full-bosomed, ripely developed woman, whose flowing robes scarcely conceal the suggestions of her voluptuous figure, a type that was later to become the feminine ideal of many Venetian painters. But we must not linger here with other followers of Giorgione, for we have yet to speak of a painter of whom it has been said that, while on one hand he combined the qualities of Gian Bellini, Giorgione, and Palma, on the other he prepared the way for the appearance of Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese; and that painter is Titian.

The career of Tiziano Vecelli (c. 1477-1576), usually called TITIAN, is without parallel in the history of art. He exceeded the average span of man's life by a generation. He was painting with vigour and freshness when other artists born long after him had gone to their graves. Living in Venice he was able to work in security, while the masters of Rome and Florence were in peril of their lives. Always of an inquiring turn of mind, always a student even when he had passed the allotted span of "three score years and ten," he went forward from one phase of painting to another, until — having begun the study of art as a pupil of the brothers Bellini — he ended as the precursor of Rembrandt. In the pictures of this remarkable man, the art of Venice reached the peak of its perfection, and, taken in their totality, his works warrant him being regarded as one of the greatest artists the world has ever known. Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo may have surpassed him — indeed did surpass him — in single qualities, but none of them equalled him in general mastery.

No document gives definite information on the events of Titian's life until he had passed his thirtieth year. Vasari gives the year of his birth as 1480, Ridolfi and others give 1477; but we must not pause in this brief notice of his work to deal with the differences of the critics as to the probable date of his birth. But if we cannot be quite sure as to the exact year of Titian's birth, we know definitely the year of his death which took place in Venice in 1576, and if he was — as he wrote to Philip II — over ninety-five years of age in 1571, he lived in one of the most momentous periods in the history of Europe. He lived in the century that began with the printing of the first

book by Caxton in England, the century that saw Columbus making his first discoveries, Magellan sailing round the globe, the assembling of the Diet of Worms, the rise of Luther, the spread of Protestantism, the calling of the Council of Trent, the death of the Emperor Charles V, and the revolt of the Netherlands against Spain, then the greatest Catholic power in Christendom.

The son of Gregorio Vecelli, a distinguished soldier, councillor, and descendant of the Counts of Cadore, Titian was born in the little township of Pieve, high up among the mountains of Cadore to the north of Venice, on the road uniting Italy with the Tyrol. When ten years old, he was apprenticed by his uncle, Antonio Vecelli, to a Venetian mosaicist, Sebastiano Zuccati. Later, as we learn from Ludovico Dolce, who wrote in 1587 during the lifetime of Titian and was personally acquainted with him, he studied first under Gentile Bellini, whom he soon quitted for the studio of his more famous brother, Gian Bellini. Here he was a fellow pupil with Giorgione, who imparted what was to be a lasting influence on his life and work; and here, too, he first met Palma Vecchio, Sebastian del Piombo, and probably Lorenzo Lotto, all destined to become renowned.

The world possesses to-day youthful works of many great artists such as those of Dürer and Raphael, but there has been discovered no youthful work by Titian. In Bellini's studio he became an assistant to Giorgione and, if we have no record of the first years of his activity, his earliest extant works indicate that he slowly and gradually built up his own style on the lines of Giorgione. In 1508 the two artists worked together at the decorations of the Fondaco de' Tedeschi, Venice, which have long since been destroyed, but an idea of which may be formed from the frescoes, "The Meeting of Joachim and Anna" in the Scuola del Carmine, and from the "Three Miracles of S. Anthony," painted three years later, by Titian himself in the Scuola di S. Antonio, Padua. These prove him to have been a worthy pupil and successor of Giorgione. In 1511 Titian entered the service of the Duke of Ferrara and, in 1514, painted for that nobleman his world-famed picture "The Tribute Money," the most striking feature of which is the sharp contrast between the two characters: our Divine Lord, the embodiment of a perfectly noble man, and the Pharisee, the embodiment of a mean, cunning, and malignant tempter. This painting, one of Titian's masterpieces, has commanded the admiration of four centuries for the almost unequalled power its creator displays in imitating nature, for the divine beauty and calm majesty he succeeded in getting into the face and figure of our Redeemer, and for the fact that his conception of Christ was copied by Van Dyck and the European artists of succeeding generations and is in favour down to the present time.

It is probable that to the four or five years about the period of "The Tribute Money," we may assign the "Flora" of the Uffizi, the "Vanitas" of Munich, the "Salome" of the Doria Gallery of Rome, and other half-length female figures all painted from the same Venetian model and beauty of the period. Some of Titian's best portraits, notably his "The Man with the Glove," regarded as one of the greatest portraits ever painted, and in which the influence of Giorgione is still seen, were produced in the years around 1517.

Giorgione had died in 1511, the aged Bellini in 1515, and Titian was now coming to be regarded as the greatest Venetian painter of the day. In succession to Gian Bellini, he had received from the Senate of Venice the office of "La Sanseria," with an annual income, on condition that he would paint the portrait of every Doge who might happen to be appointed during his term of office. He painted his first Doge in 1521. Titian was now entering the period of his maturity when he produced works of supreme artistic quality. He painted three "Bacchanals" for a chamber in the Palace at Mantua, two of these are in Madrid and one, his "Bacchus and Ariadne," painted in 1522, is in the National Gallery, London. This frequently reproduced and greatly admired picture, while undoubtedly a masterpiece of composition and colour-harmony, full of rhythm and displaying vigorous technique, is inspired with, nay, is saturated with the very spirit of paganism. It is not only of pagan origin but creates the impression of having been painted from a purely physical and material point of view.

About 1523 Titian painted "The Entombment," now in the Louvre, one of the world's priceless pictures, for Federigo Gonzaga, the son of Isabella d'Este. The conception, design, drawing, harmony of colour, and deep devotional feeling of this set it apart as one of the most moving religious pictures ever painted. In it there are no traces of the influences of Palma or Giorgione, and its execution placed Titian in a position without a rival in Venice. To the years 1526 and 1528 respectively belong his well-known "Pesaro Madonna"—which we have already mentioned when referring to the rise and fall of art in the service of the Church at the beginning of this book—and his "Death of S. Peter of Verona." These two works mark the end of his first and, so far as religious paintings are concerned, his finest period.

In his "Pesaro Madonna" Titian broke once and for all with the traditional method of depicting Mary and her Divine Son. He inaugurated a revolution in the history of the altar-piece, to its detriment, from which it never recovered, and not only adopted the role of dictator to posterity, but also that of defier of posterity. Many critics regard this painting as one of the

finest examples of Titian's composition and grouping; and such it is. We are well aware that scarcely any of his works had a greater influence on following ages; we know that his successors took it as their model for altar-pieces of the Madonna; we admit that he enthroned the Blessed Virgin and the Child above the saints—at whose feet kneel the members of the Pesaro family—in a stately and dignified manner; we admit the consummate art with which he has managed his colour scheme, and that, while removing the principal figures from their wonted central position and relegating them to a subordinate position at the side of the picture, he used every artifice at his command to concentrate attention on the Babe and His Mother. But precisely in that Titian fails. We have no wish to attempt to decry this wonderful painting, but we make bold to say that all the genius and artistry of Titian did not enable him to break successfully with the older form of composition. In his hands this ostensibly devotional picture became merely an historical picture. He shows us Jesus and His Mother through a richly pilastered, entablatured, and arched opening; a banner with the arms of the Borgias is flaunted in our face; enormous circular columns and a group of people—among whom there is an inquisitive boy—immediately attract our attention; and, suddenly, we begin to realise that Jesus and Mary are not—although they were meant to be—the most important figures of the picture, and that they are but two of a group. We are afraid Titian's vaunted *Pesaro Madonna* was, as we said earlier in this book, painted merely for the personal ostentation of its donor. But be that as it may, his experiment in making Jesus and Mary merely two of a group reached its climax, later, in Paolo Veronese's "*Jesus in Simon the Pharisee's House*," when that painter out-did Titian by making our Blessed Lord not one of a group but, we might almost say, merely one of a mob in which He can scarcely be distinguished! It is to be wondered at that Titian has been accused of furthering the decadence of sacred art?

Titian's "*Death of S. Peter of Verona*," although commissioned in 1528 by the Scuola de S. Peter Martyr, for the Dominican Church of SS. Giovanni and Paolo in Venice, was not delivered to the Friars till 1530. The original painting, remarkable for its brooding, stormy landscape, its storm-tossed trees, and the swift startling movements of the murderers of the Dominican friar, is no longer in existence having been burned—with a picture of Gian Bellini's—in a fire ignited by the bursting of an Austrian shell in 1876. But from the two copies of this picture we have seen, we can readily believe that Reynolds, Wilkie, and other distinguished painters were tremendously impressed as they stood before it, and that it merited Vasari's tribute: "Titian

never in all his life produced a more finished work." A copy of the picture was made in the seventeenth century by Cigoli and now hangs in the place of the original, and another copy was made by James Atkins, the Irish artist, who died in 1833, and is now one of the prized possessions of Queen's University, Belfast.

Titian had devoted his best powers for more than a decade to the great sacred subjects which had won him an international reputation, but he was now impelled by his rapidly growing connexion with the princely courts — which reached its climax in his friendship with the Emperor Charles V who knighted and created him a Count Palatine of the Empire — to turn his thoughts and his talents to works of another kind. His "Death of S. Peter Martyr" was the last of the many great altar-pieces he had produced in the course of some fourteen years. Thenceforward this type of picture occupies but a small space in the field of his activity. It must not, however, be inferred from this that Titian, in the second period of his career, devoted himself exclusively to profane subjects. His second period, while not prolific of religious works of major importance, was not wholly barren of religious masterpieces. Between the years 1530 and 1570 he produced some excellent and some mediocre studies of saints, among others those of SS. Francis, Jerome, Dominic, Margaret, Mary Magdalene, Nicholas of Bari, and Francis Compostello; and to the same four decades of his life we owe quite a number of other devotional works, such as "The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin," "Christ on the Cross," "The Annunciation," "The Transfiguration," "The Descent of the Holy Ghost," the works we have already mentioned in contrast to his pagan pictures, and, lastly, the *Pieta* which his death prevented him from finishing. Yet all these religious pictures are but a very small percentage of the works that came from Titian's studio in the forty years between 1530 and 1570.

Another pen than ours — in a book solely devoted to Titian — must write a description of his invitation to the court of the Emperor Charles V; of his work for Paul III; of his paintings in the Spanish churches, palaces, and galleries. A critic has said: "At Madrid a whole museum might be formed of the works of Titian alone." Another must write of the pagan voluptuousness of his classical subjects; of his merits as a portrait or a landscape painter; of the claims that might be made for him as the greatest colourist of Italy; of his works now in the churches or the Accademia of his native Venice; or of those treasured in Rome, Paris, London, and other European capitals.

It would be impossible here to enumerate even briefly his gallery of portraits of popes, monarchs, doges, princes, cardinals, monks, knights, artists,

writers, and women famed for their rank or beauty. His "Man with a Glove" is, as we have said before, one of the greatest portraits ever painted. His "La Bella" alone would have placed any artist in the front rank. No more astute, character-revealing portraits have been painted than his "Paul III," "Aretino," or "Paul III and his Nephews." His portraits of Philip II, of his daughter Lavinia, and of himself, are also to be numbered among his masterpieces. Speaking of him as a portraitist, Louis Gillet says: "Holbein was also individual, but how much less the artist; Van Dyck is perhaps more graceful, but how much more monotonous and affected. Among portrait-painters Titian is comparable only to the greatest, a Rembrandt or a Velasquez, with the interior life of the former, and the clearness, certainty, and obviousness of the latter."

Titian's relations with Charles V, Francis I, Phillip II, Alfonso and Isabella d'Este, and the ducal houses of Ferrara and Urbino won him opportunities of displaying his genius and of early winning recognition as one of the first of the princely painters of the Renaissance. To this day, in some respects, he shares in the world-wide admiration accorded to Raphael, Leonardo, and Michelangelo.

To those who have painstakingly studied his life and works, Titian has always presented a medley of curious contrasts, a complexity of character and an elusiveness of personality quite his own; for he represented in a single man two entirely distinct and contrary phases of development. For example, there are not in existence to-day any more nobly conceived or devotion-inspiring pictures than, to name but a few, his "Assumption of the Blessed Virgin," his "Ecce Homo," his "Entombment," his "Supper at Emmaus," his "Crowning with Thorns," or his "Trinity" ("La Gloria"). On the other hand, there are not, in the whole range of Italian painting, any more purely pagan pictures than his "Bacchanals" or his voluptuous reclining Venuses. But in painting saints or satyrs, sacred or profane subjects, serene altar-pieces, or dramatic compositions, in frescoes or oils, in landscapes or portraits, whether he depicts the maternal tenderness of the Blessed Virgin or the perfection of form of a mythological goddess, or whether we go to his pictures to examine them for composition, design, drawing, or colour, we nearly always find in them that which we seek, and find it in its fullest perfection.

We have attempted to show in this book that the art of Florence was the development of the art of Giotto di Bondone, that the art of Siena was the development of the art of Duccio di Buonsegna, and that the art of Umbria was the development, in a broad sense, of the art of Gentile da Fabriano and Piero della Francesca. But the art of Giorgione or Titian was not the develop-

ment of the art of any one great master: Venice had no Duccio or Giotto. It is difficult to tell the story of the rise of Venetian art, because it is derived in many ways and from varied sources, and this is equally true of the art of the followers of Titian. His art was too complex and his personality too strong for his disciples to be able to follow in his footsteps, for he had traversed and explored every possible field of art. Many artists have been called his pupils, the best known of them is Paris Bordone (1495-1570) with whose works limits of space prevent us from dealing, but Titian's greatest followers, Paolo Veronese and Tintoretto, were not his pupils and were too independent to become mere imitators of his art.

Perhaps we have been rather harsh in this book in referring to the Venetian School as the first secular school of Italian painting, and have greatly misjudged it from a religious standpoint. Or too ready to point out the sheer paganism of Andrea Mantegna's Louvre "Parnassus," and the ghastly ugliness of his Brera "Dead Christ." Perhaps we have been too censorious in referring to Cosimo Tura's "Madonna and Child with Saints" as a veritable battleground of beliefs, to the charm and sensuous beauty of some of Correggio's female saints, or in dubbing Carpaccio as a mere painter of the *calle* and *canali*. Or have erred in accusing the Guilds of Venice of being the means of breaking the last ties that bound art to the service of the Church; or in saying much of Giorgione's profane subjects and little of his sublime Castelfranco "Madonna." Perhaps we have drawn too much attention to the plump, full-bodied women in the paintings of Giorgione followers; or spoken too strongly of Titian's mythological and erotic pictures, which became more sensual after 1550, or of the havoc he wrought with the altar-piece when he transported Jesus and Mary from the central line of his "Pesaro Madonna." Nevertheless, all these events had their origin in Venice itself or in the northern cities whose painters helped to form the School of Venice. No matter how leniently we might have dealt with them, these events are like so many sign-posts for those who run to read, that indicate the downward path taken by the painters of the last great Italian School that ultimately led to one of their number, Paolo Veronese, being summoned before the Inquisition for having introduced sensual figures into religious pictures. The artist, we know, was acquitted of the charge preferred against him, but his dismissal by the State tribunal was not a vindication of Renaissance art which had received a death-blow from which it never recovered.

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